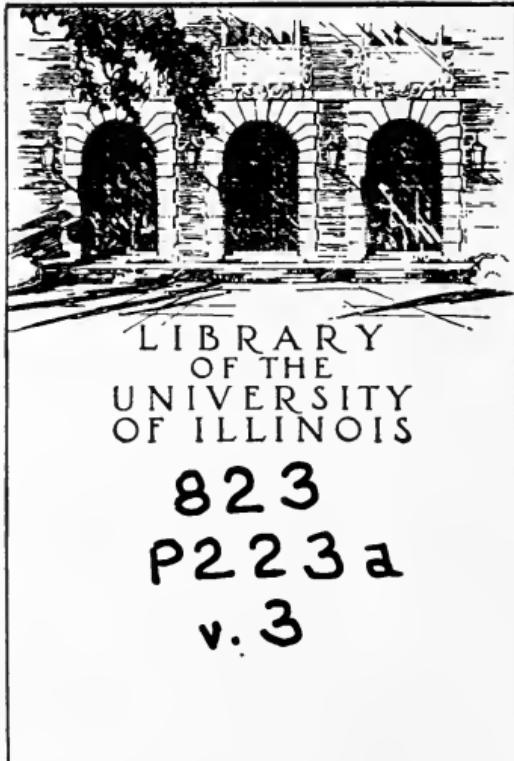
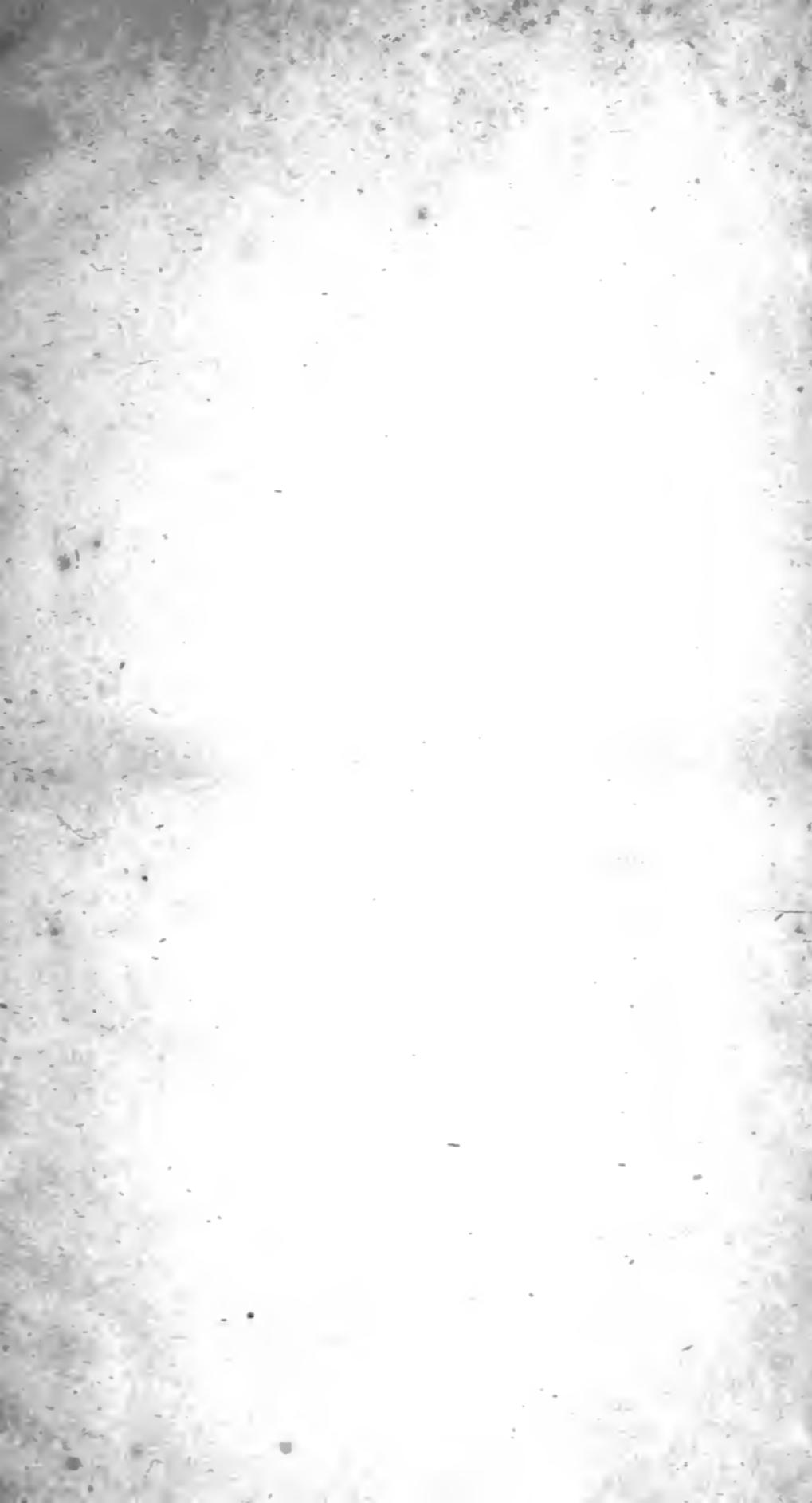
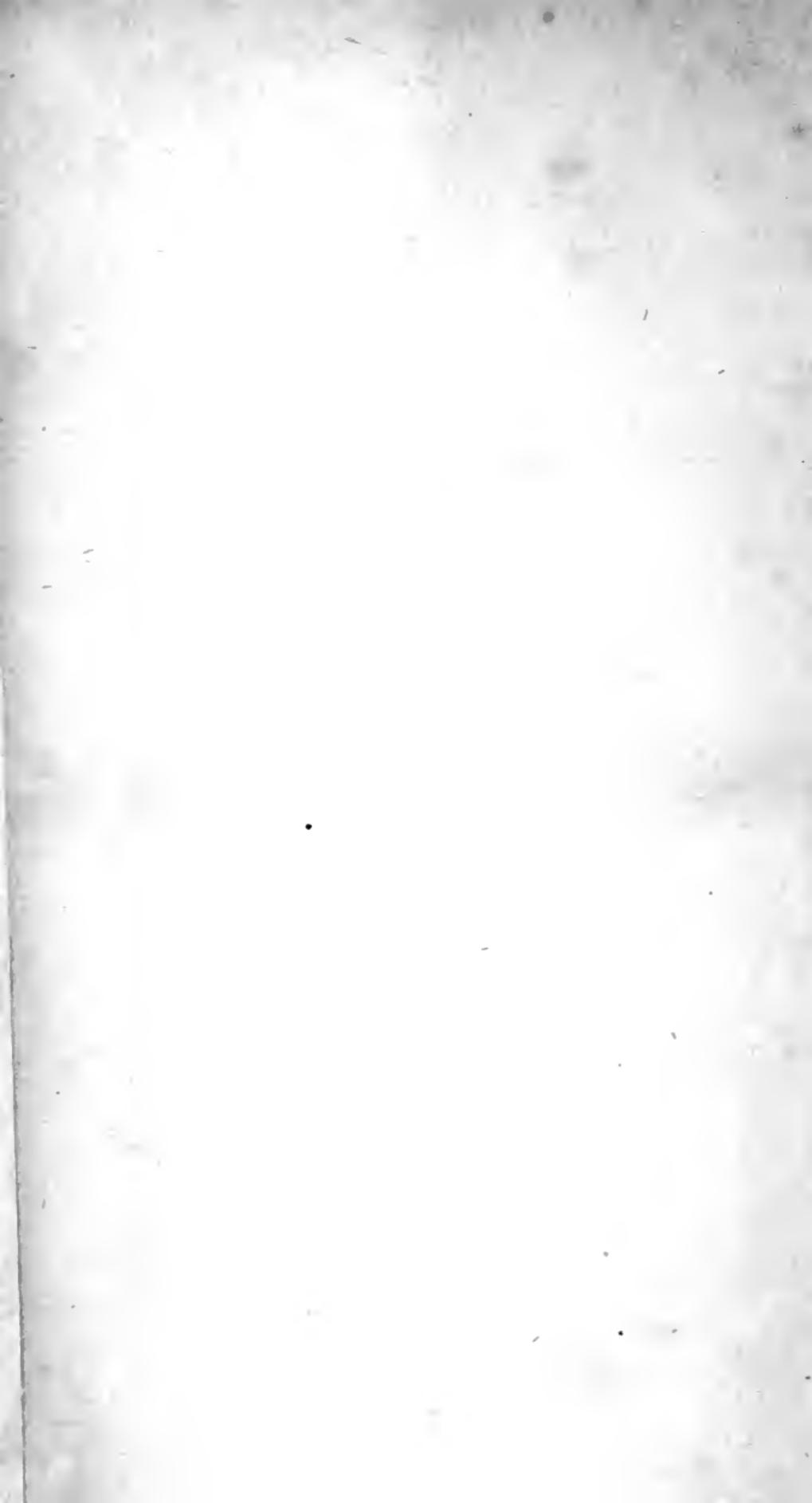




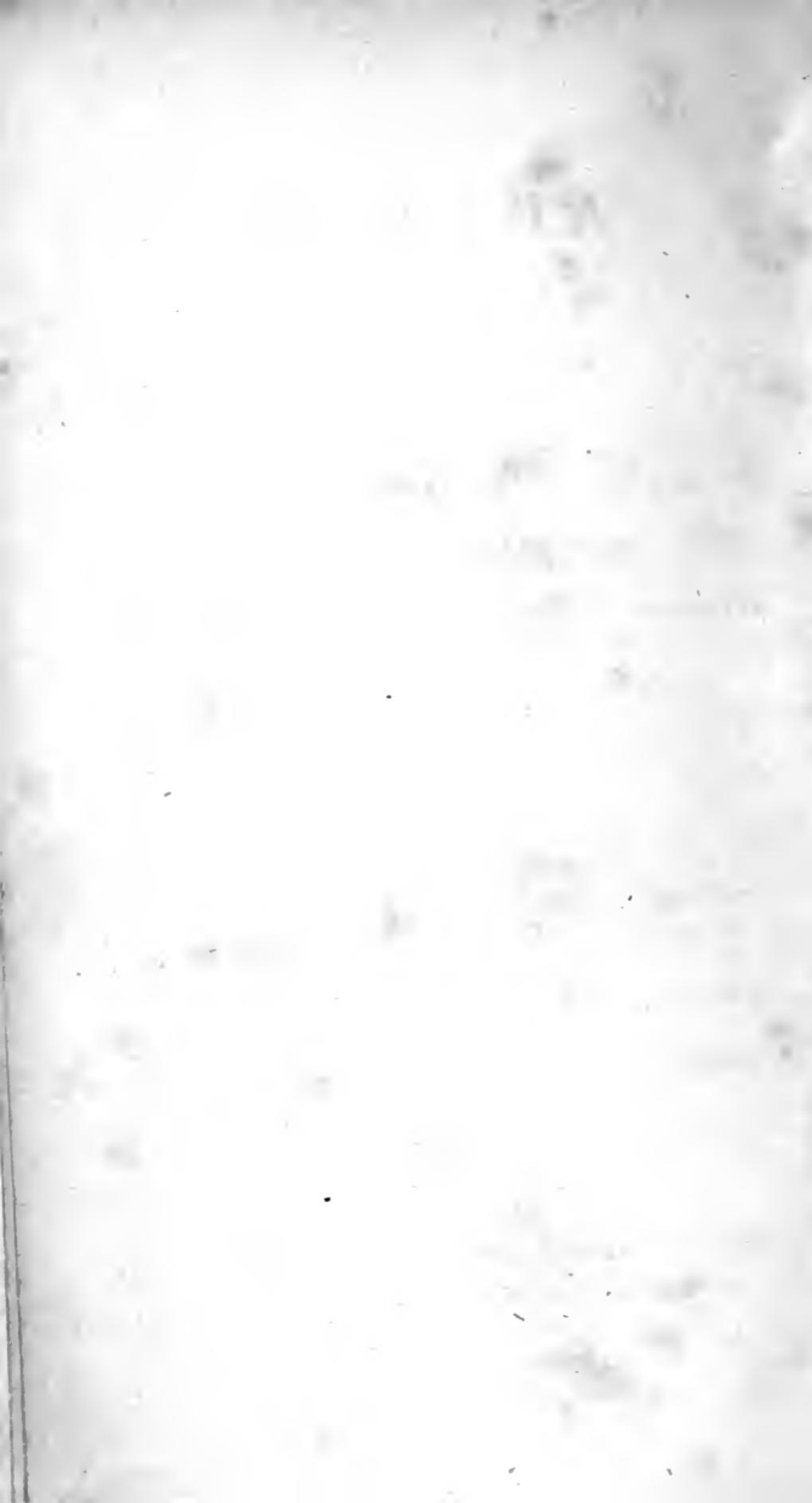
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ARETAS,

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY EMMA PARKER,

*AUTHOR OF "ELFRIDA, HEIRESS OF BELGROVE," AND
"VIRGINIA, OR THE PEACE OF AMIENS."*

VOL. III.

Lei sol vagheggio; e se pur l'altre io miro,
Guardo nel vago altrui quel, ch' è in lei vago,
E ne gl' Idoli suoi vien ch'io l'adore :
Ma contanto somiglia al ver l' imago
Ch' erro, e dolc' è l'error ; pur ne sospiro,
Come d'ingiusta, Idolatria d'Amore.

TASSO.

LONDON;

PRINTED FOR B. AND R. CROSBY AND CO.,
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ARETAS.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

ARETAS was perhaps right when he said, he had never truly loved before ! His boyish passion for Constance owed its origin to accidental causes. While yet a child, he had fancied himself enamoured of her, and the more readily persuaded himself into this idea from the circumstance of her being older than himself, and consequently appearing almost a woman, while he was still in an

ARETAS.

early stage of boyhood : when, (and perhaps when only) the other sex most generally prefer a female of superior years, whose notice seems, at once, to elevate the youthful admirer to the dignity of a man. This, and the extreme intimacy existing between their families, was the foundation of Aretas's attachment to Constance, in which he romantically persisted, while yet a stranger to the world, and unacquainted with the charm contained in the peculiar polish, to be gained alone in the society of the *beau monde* ! that elegance and easy good breeding, which display to the utmost advantage, a superiority of accomplishments ; and he really believed Constance to be the most beautiful, as well as the

most perfect being that had ever been created.

When first he had beheld Miss Clarendon, he had been struck with the contrast her manners offered to that timid *mauvaise honte*, that often disguised the demeanour of Constance ; but provoked at any comparison by which the latter lost ; he affected to think lightly of Victoria's charms, and for a short time withheld that admiration which others voluntarily offered. But it was speedily extorted from him by her extraordinary beauty ; and it might almost be said, that at the very first sight of Victoria, his heart paid homage to her. It should be remembered that he had then been two months absent from Constance, and

during that time had never heard her even mentioned (till that morning by his uncle), and at his age the mind soon gets weary of dwelling merely on ideas : and perhaps, at any period, it requires an object of uncommon attractions, to retain its influence unimpaired in the imagination of man, unaided by some auxiliary remembrancer, to obstruct the power of that time-created torpor, which in the lapse of months and years, works such inconceivable miracles on the human mind !

Aretas remained blind to his danger during the chief part of his voyage, but towards the end of it he began to feel uncomfortable, as he found that while pursuing his epistolary addresses to Con-

stance, he became weary, and at a loss for words. On reading them over he thought the style, towards the conclusion, was obviously cooler, while the *friend of his heart* was even *oftener* mentioned than *the object of his adoration*. But this he persuaded himself arose from his subject being nearly exhausted, as the monotony of a sea voyage offered little to excite ideas. He seemed to have forgotten that the theme on which he had been accustomed to dwell, is allowed to be inexhaustible, and that he himself in the former part of his letters had often declared it to be so. But though from time to time he was casually awakened to a suspicion of the revolution that had taken place in his heart, he contrived speedily to soothe himself again into the

delightful dream, which represented a tyrannic passion, as animated esteem. Nor was the delusion entirely destroyed, until his first visit to Sanseverino, when the pang that darted through his mind on beholding Victoria smile on Allioni, at once dissolved the deceptive film that had so long obscured the rays of truth, and destroyed it for ever.

That lamentable excess of indulgence, Aretas had been accustomed to from his earliest infancy, aggravated to an infinite degree the misery he was now involved in. Unused to contradiction of any kind, he was ill prepared to sustain such a weight of cruel perplexity; and which was the more insupportable from his consciousness that it originated in his

own headstrong vehemence, which had not only led him to work upon his doating parents, till he brought them to concede to his inclinations, but had hurried him into a serious declaration of his love to Constance. He had vowed never to give her up while she permitted him to encourage the most distant hope, and by his solemn asseverations, had extorted from her a confession of a corresponding sentiment; and so well was he acquainted with her disposition, that he was convinced she would nurture and indulge her tenderness to the greatest excess, as well from inclination as from a persuasion that it was her duty to do so. For well might she feel confident (after his professions of unalterable regard) of being one day his wife, as sir

Henry had promised not to oppose her lover's wishes after the expiration of a certain period, when every bar to their union would be removed. And, though during that time they were forbidden to hold any intercourse, Aretas felt confident that Constance conceived herself as firmly bound to him as if they had been already united, relying on his protestations of constancy and everlasting love, and that she would reject all other suitors without a moment's hesitation.

Though no formal engagement sanctioned by their parents existed between them, Aretas felt himself, by all the laws of honour solemnly affianced, and never to marry another while Constance continued single, was a resolution he was

bound to abide by religiously, no less than by the consideration of an oath ; for though *lover's vows* are supposed to have very little weight attached to them, Aretas could acknowledge no power that could absolve them, and held them as sacred as those pledged at the altar, for they had been proffered equally in the sight of heaven.

CHAPTER II.

ARETAS was insensible to the hardness of his rocky pillow, as stretched in agony of mind he leant his head on it, presenting his flushed cheek to the cooling sea-breeze that played in the wild luxuriance of his hair, which in natural beauty adorned his temples, though in other respects, so far sacrificed to fashion, as to avoid the imputation of eccentricity or conceit. He heeded not the increas-

ing gloom of night, which, however, was continually varied by the lightning that played almost incessantly along the horizon, and which is so common in that atmosphere as to be totally disregarded. But had the convulsions of the mighty Etna itself at that moment shaken the whole island, and threatened to overwhelm it with boiling lava, Aretas would have been insensible of danger, nor could all the demons which poets have represented as holding their infernal court within that wondrous mountain, have produced a stronger ferment than that which now agitated the mind of Aretas. But suddenly a soft and exquisite sensation harmonized his jarring passions, as the idea suggested itself that he was beloved by Victoria. But only for a

few moments did this blissful balm retain its influence, when with aggravated force his self-reproaches seemed to call aloud against the cruelty of glorying in such a supposition, and represented the love of Victoria, as the chief and grandest source of perpetual regret. But no, it was impossible. He felt that if such indeed was the case he could not regret it ! and the bare idea inspired a glow of brightest joy, at the very moment that he was denouncing vengeance against himself for feeling enraptured at the thought, and while dwelling on the idolized image of Victoria, it might indeed be said, that

“Anguish seemed to sublimate delight.”

The encroaching tide at length forced

Aretas to arouse himself, and with quick and agitated steps he hastened homeward, but he was yet a quarter of a mile from the residence of Signora Bogia, when, chancing to cast his eyes towards some jutting rocks that formed the inner boundary of the shore, he thought he perceived a dark figure emerging from ambush. A sudden gleam of lightning convinced him he was not mistaken: The idea of Di Velino instantly flashed across his mind. He stopped, and erecting himself with the undaunted air of instinctive courage, he looked boldly towards the object which appeared advancing, but yet indistinctly visible.

Aretas was unarmed; but a moment's reflection convinced him that open intre-

pidity was no defence against the hidden poignard of the assassin, which would strike ere it was perceived. But shocked at the vile suspicion that had suggested itself, and by which he really believed he injured Di Velino, he walked steadily forward, yet kept his eyes fixed on the figure which was advancing from the side, and followed the direction he took. He determined, if it approached near to him to close with it at once; as he felt confident he could thus secure himself from the attack of any one person, and a combined assault or an attempt to overpower him by numbers he scarcely apprehended in that spot, as it was not more than half a mile from the Marino, which was at this hour thronged with the inhabitants of the city, and it was not

unlikely that some stragglers might extend their wanderings along the shore. Had not the figure first appeared in ambush, it would have excited neither his surprise or suspicion, and he now felt inclined to believe it meditated robbery rather than assassination, which was then rare at Palermo.

Aretas felt confident he had no private enemy, and though Allioni might be exasperated against him, on reflection the noble mind of the young Englishman discarded the horrible idea that had for a moment found place in it. The figure was not many paces from Aretas, when with surprise he discovered it to be a female attired in a mourning habit. From her being alone and evidently de-

sious of throwing herself in his way, the conclusions Aretas felt inclined to draw were more natural than charitable, and he took a circuit to avoid her: when, by the most eager gesticulations she endeavoured to attract his attention. But this energy of action is so general among the Sicilians as to fail of exciting those apprehensions of extraordinary distress and agitation which we should infer from seeing an English person so affected.

Aretas feigned blindness to these importunate gestures; not doubting, that if his first suspicion (concerning this female) was erroneous, she was the embassador of some fair Sicilian dame who had quarrelled with her *cicisbeo*, and who

thought the youthful Englishman would add eclat to her charms by supplying the place of her discarded lover. There was no vanity in this conclusion, for Aretas had already been assailed by several attacks of that nature, as his attractive person and insinuating manners could not fail of being appreciated by the susceptible Sicilian fair. But at all times the smallest dereliction from delicacy in the sex, only excited in Aretas disgust or regret at a degradation he never failed to lament, but at a moment like the present, when his whole soul was distracted by the tumultuous conflicts of the most refined and hopeless passion, his nature recoiled with a degree of horror from every thought inimical to it. For “ As little can the mind thus agitated yield to

low impressions, as the mist can sleep on the surface of our northern Windermere, when the strong wind is driving the lake onward with foam and billow before it.”*

Aretas found that he was pursued, for he heard quick steps behind him, accompanied by the short breathings of agitation. Averse to entering into a parley from the apprehension that he should have some difficulty in getting rid of his companion, Aretas was reluctant to stop, but as she seemed resolved to keep pace with him, he stepped on one side in order to let her pass, hoping his manner would convince her her pursuit was

* Colridge.

in vain. No sooner did he cast his eyes on her, than she clasped her hands together, and in the attitude of earnest supplication murmured something in a most impressive voice, but so low and agitated as to be inarticulate.

Aretas now believing this to be a case of distress, arising from poverty and affliction, instantly resigned his whole attention to the energetic speaker, whose countenance he could now plainly discern, as the lightning played on her pale convulsed features, half shaded by a deep black veil, thrown partially aside, mingling with the mourning habit that enveloped the whole interesting figure. Again she would have spoken, when the sound of noisy merriment, proceeding

from a party advancing along the shore struck on her ear, and with a start of terror she threw her hands and eyes to heaven, exclaiming, “*Il ciélo vi guardi.*” (Heaven preserve you) and darting from him, she fled towards the rocks, and was soon lost to the view of the astonished Aretas.

How greatly did he regret that he had even for a moment disregarded her endeavours to arrest his attention, which he now believed were dictated by an excess of wretchedness, that she might imagine he had the means of relieving; probably springing from poverty, for though her figure was graceful, he could only discern that her habiliments were black, and whether they were of that

superior texture that would have denoted her to be above want he knew not.

No sooner was the party which had interrupted her past and out of sight, than Aretas approached the rocks (where she had appeared to secrete herself) and wandered among them for a considerable time in the hope of encountering her, but the search proved vain, and as he had no further means of tracing her, he bent his way homeward, where he soon after arrived. The image of the mourner was soon driven from his mind by the superior interest that engrossed it ; for, though he had a heart ever alive to "other's woes" (which he never could have overlooked, while his active exertions could in

any measure have relieved them, yet when they were rendered useless) the magnitude of his own miseries naturally recurred to his imagination, and speedily superseded every minor consideration.

CHAPTER III.

ARETAS rejected all Signora Böglia's intrusive civilities, and by an air of impatience silenced the anxious inquiries of the solicitous Lewis, (who apprehended by his master's aspect that he was indisposed) and without tasting the delicate collation that was spread for him, Aretas retired to his chamber.

His nightly custom of recording the

events of the day recurred to his mind. There stood the writing desk, placed by Lewis between two wax lights opposite the open window; for he knew his master was in the habit of writing for some time before he retired to rest, neither was Lewis a stranger to his partiality for Miss Hamilton. Servants generally contrive to get a pretty clear insight into the affairs of the families they serve! indeed, that caution which is preserved in presence of common domestics, had often been relinquished when Lewis had been by, and he entertained not a doubt his young master corresponded with the object of his affections, as he was ignorant that it was interdicted by sir Henry.

Aretas took the chair placed for him

at the table, on which he rested one elbow, and supported his burning forehead on his hand; as he recalled the events of the day, and thought how wholly superfluous a record of them would prove, when they were engraven on his mind in characters traced by remorse and anguish indelible as memory itself. He groaned in the bitterness of his heart, and starting from an agonizing train of thought, he mechanically opened his writing desk, uncertain of his own intention.

The first thing that saluted his eyes was a letter to Constance, to which he had only the night before added a few lines, for lately he had contented himself with writing a little at a time, and

so by degrees completing such an epistle as he had been wont to strike off at once. He seized the paper, and tore it in a thousand pieces, as he started up and paced about the room in a paroxysm of anger against himself, muttering, “ Hypocrite ! vile, deceitful, self-deluded hypocrite ! detested scrawl, never shall you be imposed upon that innocent, unsuspecting being ! so wronged, so injured ! never shall you be imposed upon her as an evidence of a passion which exists no longer, and which endeavoured to support its lingering influence by these specious offerings to hypocrisy ; couched in the strained and bombastic phrases of affected servency ! how empty, heartless and unmeaning ! and—O, perfection of deceit ! then spoke in friendship’s lan-

guage of Victoria, dwelt on the theme, while all the rest was but a preface to the dear delight of writing that angel's name. Victoria ! heavenly idol of my adoring heart ! Victoria !—Oh ! how justly named ! for victorious over every feeling of my breast, I breathe but for you alone !”—Again he sunk on a seat, and still dwelling on the image of the dear destroyer of his peace, he was heedless of the lapse of time, till aroused by a noise from below, and which, from the murmur of voices increased to the jar of discord. It seemed to draw nearer, and he distinctly heard the sobs of a woman, and the accents of Signora Bogia elevated above the rest, as if expostulating in no very gentle terms, with some other persons. They now approached along the

corridor, into which Aretas's chamber opened, and he began to apprehend that the Signora was bringing the offenders to him, in order that he might act as umpire in arranging their disagreement; but, however, they passed on while she continued to speak so fast as scarcely to be intelligible, and he could only catch the words, "*Il Signóre forestiére,*" (the foreign gentleman,) which was repeated several times. From this, Aretas inferred that he was in some measure implicated in their dispute, and he suspected that there were other lodgers in the house, though Signora Bogia had affirmed that it was only occupied by herself and domestics.

Aretas now recollects having seen

several trifling articles about the apartments the first day he had surveyed them, which led him to imagine they were at that time inhabited, and it struck him that Signora Bogia had compelled the former occupants to quit them, and perhaps put up with the inferior part of the house, in order that she might accommodate him, or rather herself, by the considerable emolument she was to secure by so doing. He resolved to inquire into this matter the ensuing morning, as he felt uncomfortable at the idea of being made accessory to any injustice.

He was but too well aware of the infatuation, which had led him to seek that situation, and determine on

continuing in the neighbourhood of Palermo, where, (as he had already seen every thing worthy of inspection) he had no longer an excuse for remaining, and ought rather to appropriate that period to visiting the other parts of the island, as it was uncertain how long his time might be his own, and he was convinced his uncle concluded he had no other intention, than that of immediately prosecuting his design of traversing Sicily.

Aretas felt that it was absolutely requisite the project should no longer be delayed, and that nothing remained for him to do, but to fly for ever from a spot, that had witnessed the destruction of his happiness, and from whence honour

and propriety demanded that he should banish himself.

But to resolve on no more beholding Victoria, or on beholding her for the **LAST** time was an effort of heroism, he felt utterly incapable of making. To tear himself *suddenly* away from her, was to him an impossibility. No, he would wean himself by degrees from the charms of her society: he would for a few days resist going to Sanseverino; he would then only pay a short visit, when the period of his absence should be still longer, and then he would only see her again for a few moments.

Thus he would gradually prepare himself for the horrors of eternal sepa-

ration. Eternal separation ! Oh ! ex-cruciating thought ! everlasting exile from Victoria ! what agony was in the bare suggestion ? To Aretas it seemed a destiny, more bitter than human nature could sustain.

CHAPTER III.

IN such distracting reflections did Aretas pass the night, and a feverish glow still died his cheek, exciting the anxiety of his domestic as he attended him at breakfast. Scarcely were his heavy eyelids raised sufficiently to permit the soft lustre of his pensive eye to discover itself, and it seemed a fatigue to him, when he looked at Lewis, and (in order to dissipate the uneasiness he perceived

he endured on his account) accosted him, and inquired the occasion of the last night's disturbance. Lewis said he had heard nothing of it, as he had been in bed and asleep, but he knew there were other lodgers in the house, as there was a man servant, who did not belong to Signora Bogia, and who appeared occupied in attending on somebody else.

After breakfast Aretas sent for Signora Bogia and interrogated her respecting her lodgers. She seemed embarrassed, and after a moment's hesitation said—
“O—you mean the Signor di Rossi, I suppose—O, yes ; he, and his—his wife, have been with me for some time. They are particular friends of mine, so I

accommodated them with part of my house."

" And they inhabited these apartments, I presume, before I took them?"

" Why, they used to be here *sometimes*, but only till I could let them to advantage."

" I thought you had said you were not in the habit of letting them!"

" Why no," returned she, colouring—" only I should have been sorry to have disappointed you, as you seemed to have taken such a fancy to them."

" Well, well, I beg you will acquaint

the Signor, or Signora de Rossi, that I am very ready to resign them, and am extremely sorry they should have been compelled to vacate them on my account."

"Indeed, I shall do no such thing: they are much better where they are, and if you leave the apartments to-morrow *they* shall not return to them. Besides they are very well satisfied."

"I should not suppose so, from the disturbance I heard last night."

"O, *that* was all Angelica's fault, she was afraid the Signor would be angry, when he came home and found her removed, and she wanted me to tell a parcel

of stories about it, but I was above such meanness; and when di Rossi came home, I just told him the truth, and he was too wise to make a fuss about it, but seemed very much pleased, for he knew very well he could not afford to live in such apartments as these."

" Has he a family?"

" No, only Angelica "

" Is she is daughter?"

" No—his wife."

" I hope they are not in distress."

Bogia hesitated, then said—" I have

not seen the colour of their money for some time. She is always pining and moping, and I believe half starves herself. I never had any conversation with her till last night, when she flew down as if she had been frightened out of her senses: and as to the Signor, he does not visit her once in a week *now*, and he used to be here continually."

"Visit her, why don't they live together?"

"O yes they live together, but he is a great deal out."

Bogia seemed impatient to make her escape, nor had Aretas any further wish to detain her, she left him satisfied of the

doubtfulness of her character, and full of commiseration for the unfortunate female under her roof; who, (whatever might be her circumstances and situation) it appeared was unhappy.

There was a delicacy in the case, which rendered it scarcely possible for a young man like him to offer her pecuniary assistance with propriety, and to attempt conveying it to her thro' Signora Bogia would probably be only making a present of it to the latter; nor was she a person he would have chosen in any way to confide in, as he was convinced she would be the first to draw the most illiberal conclusions. He was still pondering on this subject, when, to his infinite surprise, the count di Velino was announced.

Aretas received him with a lofty air, and the count at first appeared embarrassed, nor was he at any pains to conceal a weight of dejection which seemed to overwhelm him. He remained silent for a few moments after he was seated, then, speaking with obvious agitation, he said, "This visit, no doubt, is wholly unexpected; but, as it is my anxious wish to act with the most scrupulous regard to justice, and in the most open and honourable manner, I think you will not refuse to satisfy me on a subject that entirely involves my happiness." The count stopped. Aretas still remained silent, nor encouraged him, even by a look, to proceed, while the increasing colour that mantled on his cheeks was the only evidence of emotion he betrayed. Allioni

went on; “ It is needless to inform you I aspire to the hand of your lovely country-woman : but far be it from me to interfere with the *prior* claims, or just rights of one, who may have been more fortunate than myself in creating an interest in her heart, and once convinced that *such* was the case I should immediately resign all pretensions however great the sacrifice.” Again he paused, while he seemed to have recovered his composure and kept his eyes rivetted on the features of Aretas, which were now much more expressive of perturbation than his own. Still Aretas spoke not, and di Velino continued, “ After what I have said, you, as a man of honour, I am convinced, cannot refuse to inform me on what footing you consider yourself in regard to the object

I fairly offer to resign, *if* you declare yourself to be her accepted lover and future husband, sanctioned and approved of by my lord Shurgrove."

Aretas could no longer keep his seat, and he paced the apartment with disordered steps. The Italian also rose, and narrowly watched the workings of his soul.

Had Allioni challenged him that moment to decide their right to Victoria in single combat, Aretas would have felt happy, in comparison to his present misery. "What were *his* pretensions to Victoria?" this question rang in his ears "what, what indeed?" Di Velino had spoken fairly; but to answer him in the

open manner he had a right to expect, Aretas felt impossible. Could he tell the count he was at liberty to prefer his suit, for that he had himself no claims but those of friendship on Victoria, and thus sanction his persecution of her, and furnish him with weapons to insure his success, by formally resigning her? And should he make this renunciation, Allioni would doubtless impart it to Victoria, and *if* she loved him (Aretas) O! what a blow would it prove! coming too, through such a channel; what mortification, what resentment would she experience, independent of any severer disappointment?

As Aretas continued to pace the room, lost in a train of the most perplexing thoughts, without attempting to reply

to di Velino, the latter again addressed him.

"Surely you must be aware that the suspense you keep me in is of the most torturing nature! I would have sought your confidence as a friend, but with stately reserve you repelled me." A malignant smile pervaded his features at these words, he added, "But now, as the demand of justice, I call on you to proclaim yourself the lover of the beauteous Clarendon, open and honourably, as I do myself. If you refuse, I shall no longer respect your pretensions, or ever resign mine, but with my life."

"*Openly and honourably as you do!*" repeated Aretas, stopping as he erected

himself with an air of majesty, and fixed his eyes disdainfully on Allioni. He continued, “ I would recommend you to be more guarded in your language. I neither wished for your confidence or friendship, and should have been much better pleased had neither been obtruded on me.”

An ashy paleness now overspread the features of di Velino ; his lip quivered, as walking towards the door he would have spoken. After several ineffectual efforts he pronounced, with a trembling voice, “ Tis well; you refuse to satisfy me!”

“ Stop,” cried Aretas, “ I know, I feel I am wrong.” He threw himself into a chair, and rubbed his forehead violently with his hand, as the count slowly returned.

Aretas continued with his eyes shut, evincing every mark of the strongest agitation, while the natural candour of his nature, brought him to a sense of justice and propriety, which gradually succeeded to the violence of passion.

"I—" he hesitated—"I—I will say nothing about my pretensions—my views or—" He looked up, and met the eyes of di Velino bent on him, with such horrible expression, as made him start, and he became dumb as he surveyed the contracted lines of his ghastly visage, the heavy scowl of his dark brow, and the demoniac cast that pervaded the whole countenance.

He seemed instantly to read in the fixed

eye of Aretas, the impression his aspect had made, and waving one hand that he should proceed, he drew the other across his face to hide the effort it cost him to relax his features, and as he turned the hair from his temple, he assumed a look of complacency ; and again Aretas spoke.

“ I will not enlarge on my pretensions or views; you, count, are at liberty to act independent of any consideration on my account. Rest satisfied we shall not interfere with each other, you must excuse my saying more on the subject.”

Di Velino withdrew without again speaking, leaving Arctas still more miserable than he had found him.

CHAPTER IV.

BUT not more heavily wore the hours of that day to Aretas, than to Victoria. The heat was excessive, and increased the languor of her mind, and rendered it peculiarly susceptible of unpleasant impressions and foreboding anxiety. She had never before felt it so difficult, patiently to endure her father's irritability, which the state of the atmosphere increased to an extraordinary degree. She was not with-

out a hope that Aretas would repair to Sanseverino on that day, in order to do away any unfavourable impression he might conceive his late conduct had produced. But the morning passed, he appeared not, and her dejection augmented: and while lord Shurgrove indulged in his evening nap, she profited by the refreshing coolness of the hour to wander thro' the beautiful grounds she had as yet but partially traversed, and by the tranquillity of the scene, and solitary meditation endeavoured to court serenity to her bosom.

The sweetest perfume scented the air, proceeding from innumerable fragrant blossoms and flowering shrubs; amongst the latter was the beautiful Palmeta,

sembling a small palm tree, bearing an elegant flower, and there too, was the *pome d'or* (golden apple) producing a round fruit of a bright and shining colour, and the *Arbutus* or strawberry tree. The nightingales commenced their evening concert, in the deep shades obscured from the rays of the setting sun, while the low murmuring of the breeze among the foliage, filled up each pause. Victoria frequently stopped to listen, as her mind gradually became composed, unable to resist the harmonizing influence of the surrounding scene.

Now emerging from the shade, she climbed the jutting promontory of a rock, projecting at the base of the mountain, whose surface was enamelled with sponta-

neous productions of larkspur, flos Adonis, Venus's looking-glass, hawkweed and lupins, which in wild luxuriance cloathed it to its brow. Victoria cast her eyes around on the extensive landscape, illuminated by the glorious beams that glowed in the western horizon, chequered by streaks of gold, and gradually softening to a roseate tint that extended over the vault of heaven, reflecting its blushing hue on every object beneath. Old ocean seemed to have lost his sea-green mantle, or only retained sufficient to form a boundary to the sanguinary bloom that here grew deeper, and there scarcely tinged the undulating waves, diversified with innumerable chebecks, galliots and fishing boats. There the little Maltese Sparonaro scudded along the coast, and further out rode the

majestic emblem of Britannia's fame, towering above the variety of shipping, that rendered the ocean populous; and displaying her broad flag, as if to shelter the lovely shores of Sicily from an invading foe, and repel with its invincible power every attempt to penetrate the zone of security cast around the beauteous island, by the friendly waves of the Mediterranean. Recalling her fatigued eyes from the contemplation of those distant objects, Victoria surveyed the scene more immediately beneath her, and thought of *one* poet alone who was adequate to pourtraying it, for none less highly gifted with the powers of description, could possibly have done justice to it.

The western waves of ebbing day
Rolled o'er the glen their level way ;
Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
Was bathed in floods of living fire,
But not a setting beam could glow
Within the dark ravines below,
Where twined the path in shadow hid
Round many a rocky pyramid,
Shooting abruptly from the dell
Its thunder-splintered pinnacle,
Round many an insulated mass
The native bulwarks of the pass,
Huge as the tower which builder's vain
Presumptuous pil'd on Shinar's plain,
The rocky summit split and rent
Formed turret, doom, or battlement,
Or seemed fantastically set
With cupola or minaret,
Wild crest, or pagod ever deckt
Or mosque of eastern architect,

Nor were these earth born castles bare
Nor lacked they many a banner fair,
For from the shivered brows displayed
Far o'er the unfathomable glade,
All twinkling with the dew drops sheen,
The briar-rose fell in streamers green,
And creeping shrubs of thousand dyes,
Waved in the west wind's summer sighs.

Walter Scott.

CHAPTER V.

VICTORIA now again descended into the shade, and wandered for some time thro' sheltered allies and embowering shrubs, where rustic seats continually presented themselves, and where statues, offering exquisite specimens of sculpture, frequently arrested her admiration. Here and there the figure of a saint less tastefully executed, and of more modern date, placed there by the holy fathers to whom

the domain appertained, as proofs of their respect for the sacred effigy, bespoke the haunts of superstition. The part of the grounds she was now traversing, was new to Victoria, and she observed an overhanging rock with an aperture at the base that looked like the entrance to a cavern or grotto. A covert path opened exactly opposite to it, and on coming parallel with it, she with some surprise perceived that it led directly to the ruined arch, of which she could discern a part. She was now before the cave, over which she perceived an inscription in Latin, purporting the spot to be sacred to saint Rosolia. From the aperture, which formed an arch of sufficient dimensions to admit a human form erect, Victoria took a survey of the interior of the grotto,

for such it evidently was. She at first demurred to enter, but observing that a fissure in the rock, admitted yet enough light to render nearly every part discernible she advanced a few paces, but started at the sigh of a recumbent figure at the further end of the grotto, the head reclining on the hand and a crucifix before it. It appeared to be a female form, and her alarm was but transient, and she felt ashamed of it, on recollecting that this no doubt was a representation of the saint, which on approaching nearer she clearly perceived it to be. It was executed in the finest white marble, and from what Victoria had heard of the grotto and statue of saint Rosolia, on *Monte Peligrino* she immediately conjectured

that this was an exact model of the original.

She stood for some time contemplating the interesting figure, and on approaching close to it, she perceived a low door in the rock behind the statue, by which at a little distance it was entirely concealed. Victoria examined it with some curiosity, but on reflection concluded that it merely secured some interior cavity, where probably the gala suit of the saint was deposited with her jewels, and the offering that had been to her, and which were only displayed on grand festivals, when she was bedecked in all her glory, then again it struck her that the door might communicate with a passage cut thro' the rock to the neighbouring monas-

tery, for the convenience of the monks, who were probably in the habit of resorting to the shrine of St. Rosolia, there to pay their devotions. Victoria was less satisfied with this surmise, as admitting it to be just, she could not feel herself so perfectly in private, while wandering about the grounds, as she otherwise might, as there was no way by which a stranger could gain access to them, but thro' the grand entrance, (the ruined archway;) for the rocks and mountains formed a natural and impregnable boundary on one side, and a high terrace skirted that towards the sea.

She now regarded the door with apprehensive eyes, and tho' she had no desire or intention of penetrating further, she

tried to ascertain if it were locked: but that it was *not*, she was immediately convinced as it yielded a little; when a sudden resistance prevented its opening wider, and it was quickly pushed close again, either by some one within, or by a current of air. *Which*, Victoria stopped not to discover, but flew like lightning from the grotto, and pursued the shortest way to the house with breathless steps. Till recollecting herself, she relaxed her speed, and felt completely ashamed of the alarm she had experienced, and for which she now believed there were no just grounds.

Little inclined to the marvellous, she always endeavoured to account for things in the most simple manner, and she felt persuaded that it must have been a sudden

gust of air, probably admitted thro' some chasm in the interior of the rock, that had caused the door to re-close with such precipitation. She now proceeded more leisurely, but yet at a quick pace, as the evening was fast closing in, tho' a fine deep purple still dyed the heavens. A fearful timidity, the remnant of her late alarm, still affected Victoria's nerves; which again received a violent shock, as she remained rooted to the spot, on perceiving the figure of a man advancing along the path. But the idea that it was Aretas, who had perhaps repaired to the villa, and been sent by her father to seek her, produced a very opposite sensation, and with a throbbing heart and quick respiration, she ventured to proceed, while she endeavoured to overcome the pertur-

bation that had taken possession of her, and conceal from him the emotion his sudden appearance had excited ; but the apprehension that he could not fail to perceive it, increased her confusion, and wishing to appear unconscious of his approach, she kept her eyes fixed on the ground. Had she raised them, how different would have been her sensations, when instead of resting on the manly and elegant form of Aretas, advancing with the graceful air of native dignity ; a fragile, gaunt and flitting figure, striding onward with a lengthened step, and a haggard and disturbed aspect, like the gloomy spirit of the wood, would have saluted her appalled vision.

Far better would it have proved had

she been so prepared; for then the smile of joy would not have brightened her eyes, nor the blush of affection suffused her cheek, when she looked up, in the full confidence of beholding Aretas before her. Had the blooming youth, first appeared as himself, and then suddenly been transformed into a horrible skeleton, she could not have recoiled with stronger terror and disgust, than she did at the sight of di Velino! The violent revolution in her aspect was too evident to be misinterpreted. Allioni understood it perfectly, and exclaimed with a sarcastic smile, "You expected *another* I presume, for whom that blushing welcome and delightful smile, no doubt were intended? Some happier man, regardless of the bliss you

would bestow upon him ! Perhaps I *could* guess still further."

Victoria, stung to the quick, yet disdaining to reply to so an insolent address, attempted to pass on, with that air of gaudeur that indicated she despised him too much to notice him. "No," cried di Velino, obstructing her passage, "you quit me not till you have heard all that I have to say." He seized her hand, and retaining it with the grasp of passion he continued "But why should I in cold methodical language preface what I would impart—nay struggle not, for by heaven you shall not escape. That I adore you even to madness, you already know—speak not, I will not hear—I adore you, I repeat it, and never will cease to per-

secute you, till your stubborn nature shall at length be softened towards me, as it now is to an ungrateful being who voluntarily resigns you ! You tremble—aye, now you feel what I endure—Now you writhe under the galling conviction that him you doat on rejects your love, is *thankless* and *indifferent*. Yes he, the youthful Mansfield, on whose blooming face I have beheld those eyes delight to rest: those eyes you now avert in sad dismay. Yes *he* whose name has blanched your cheek, *relinquishes* every claim to you, and candidly acknowledged even to me, his views could never interfere with mine."

Victoria no longer struggled to free herself from the firm hold of di Velino;

the oft attempted words died on her lips, and overcome wth anguish, mortification and distress, she stood trembling and aghast. Allioni rejoicing in the potent effects of his words, continued, “ Regarding your happiness dearer than my own, and resolved to act according to the most punctilious laws of honour, I called on that insensible Englishman, and in exchange for my confidence solicited his. He satisfied me by at once resigning all pretensions to this hand, for which I am for ever his debtor, and though I wonder at his stoicism, still feel towards him that gratitude and friendship he has so just a claim to. To me he resigns all his interest in your heart, I will fill the place you can no longer permit him to retain! I will bask in those smiles he has dared to

monopolize, while thy endearments shall raise me to a heaven of bliss *he* never shall enjoy."

Allioni spoke the last sentence in a voice of thunder, while his frame shook universally, but suddenly modulating his tone, he repeated, "He never *could* enjoy —his cold—"

"Cease, wretched being!" now burst from Victoria, as she violently endeavoured to extricate herself from his grasp, "Nor shock my ears with a repetition of such detestable falsehoods. I heed not what you say, and know it is a shallow mean device to further your own cause. Unhand me, and let me never again behold your hated form."

“A woman’s hate! ’tis only the fore-runner of excess of love, and mark me well, the time shall come when——” he looked at her in such a dreadful manner as to cause her to shudder with horror. “But no matter,” added he, checked in what he would have said by the dismay that marked her features, “Yet *this* rely on, all I have told you of your Englishman is strictly true: nay tax him with it, he cannot deny it, or if he does I’ll swear it to his face. But one word more and that no doubt will prove most welcome. Business of moment calls me to a distant part of Sicily, and for a time I am compelled to banish myself from you, but brief will be the period, and in absence my love would gather strength *if* it were possible. But soon shall I re-

turn, and when we meet again—Victoria! it shall be to part no more." With exulting voice he pronounced the last words, and would have caught her to his heart; but with disgust and horror that engendered almost supernatural strength, she broke from him and flew towards the house. Di Velino attempted not to pursue her, for he had said all he wished on this occasion, and had no desire to approach the villa.

CHAPTER VI.

IT would be difficult indeed to give an adequate idea of the state of Victoria's mind after her interview with Allioni. His threats and violence were scarcely remembered in the superior anxiety occasioned by what he had presumed to assert respecting Aretas. But the longer she reflected on it, the more was she convinced that the whole was a fabrication of his own. Yet the recollection

of Mansfield's inconsistent behaviour when she had last seen him, and the excessive disorder he had betrayed on her attempting to sing the little French song, were stronger evidences in her estimation than all di Velino had said, that some perplexity distracted him. Her heart sunk, and a faintness came over her, as the idea suggested itself that he had some entanglement—that forbade his offering her his hand: some juvenile engagement which he heartily repented of, for she had no doubt that he loved her.

He was not of an age or disposition to practice deceit, and his behaviour even from their first acquaintance, had been a series of unremitting deference and attention, while the jealousy he had be-

trayed and his subsequent impassioned address on the preceding day were demonstrations of a sentiment that could not be mistaken. Yet if her suspicions of his situation were just, Victoria felt that she ought to be extremely offended with him for suffering his feelings so far to get the better of him as to betray themselves in her presence. But there are no offences we are so ready to pardon as those arising from an excess of affection for ourselves.

Victoria could only feel angry with herself, for having spite of all her caution and resolutions, surrendered her heart under the persuasion that no possible obstacle to her happiness could exist, as she felt assured of the devotedness of him on

whom it depended. To maintain for the future the most circumspect reserve in her conduct towards Aretas, and to endeavour by every means in her power to overcome the weakness which threatened to destroy her peace, was her firm resolve; and as the most effectual step towards enabling her to abide by it, she tried to persuade herself she should find it practicable.

Lord Shurgrove (more than usually indisposed) had retired early to bed, thus Victoria was left to the unrestrained indulgence of her uneasy meditations. She dared not acquaint her father with the alarm Allioni's intrusion had occasioned her, as she knew it would vex and irritate him to a degree which might be extremely

detrimental to him ; neither had she ever ventured to tell him that the count had presumed to make her a formal declaration of his love, as she well knew his lordship would have had no scruples in treating him with open contempt, which could not have failed to excite the most malignant feelings in the breast of the Italian. She hoped she should at least, for a short time, be freed from his persecution ; but determined never again to venture in any situation where he could surprise her, without a companion ; while she flattered herself that convinced of the utter hopelessness of his passion, its ardour would abate, and she trusted that absence would accelerate its diminution. In short her imagination, wholly filled with the image of Aretas, and being

susceptible of apprehension and unhappiness only as far as related to him, dwelt but for a moment on any other theme, which appeared light and insignificant in comparison with the stronger anxiety that occupied her breast.

With a mixture of dread and hope, she anticipated Aretas's next visit to Sanseverino, trusting she should be able more fully to ascertain the nature and extent of what she had to apprehend.

CHAPTER VII.

ARETAS, meantime, counted the heavy hours of the night, even as he had those of the day, and never before had he believed it possible that time could prove so insupportably tedious. "And must another, and *another* day pass away,"—thought he, "while yet I am compelled to retain my resolution of not repairing to Sanseverino?" (for till the third day he had determined to absent himself;)

" and *then* must I only remain a *short* time and return to wretchedness and myself ? Ah ! well may I say *myself*, for while in the presence of Victoria I am not myself ! bewitched, enchanted, fascinated ; I am carried beyond reason ; regardless of every thing but her, I forget the wretched destiny I am doomed to, and speak and act—I know not how ! O ! I must fly ! yes, yes, I *must* ; but give me time, malignant fate ! I cannot tear myself from bliss at once !" The wildest dreams distracted his momentary slumbers, and at an early hour he quitted his pillow.

He had, in the dusk of the preceding evening wandered a little way along the shore, thinking it probable that the unfortunate female who had made so urgent

an appeal to him, might again seek an opportunity of making the cause of her distress known. But he saw nothing of her, and as her idea recurred to his imagination he could not help connecting it with the account Signora Bogia had given him of the person she called Angelica. To that unfortunate, he was most anxious to afford relief, but was still puzzled how to offer it, and his mind was not in a state to devise a well digested plan, or indeed to dwell long on any subject but his own misery. On finding that a *second* day was arrived without his having ameliorated the situation of a person, obviously in distress, he reproached himself for his negligence, and immediately enveloped a sum to the amount of twenty pounds, in a blank

cover, which he directed to Angelica di Rossi. Summoning Lewis, he told him, as he apprehended their fellow lodgers were a little embarrassed, he had enclosed a trifle which he wished to have conveyed into their apartments, without their knowing from whence it came. He further added that, as from what he could gather, he had reason to believe di Rossi was not as attentive to his wife as he ought to be, he thought it best the contents of the paper should reach her when he was out of the way, when (if she chose) she might retain it for herself.

Aretas thought it no ostentation to make Lewis the confidant of his charities, as he was accustomed to act as his almoner, and now undertook to execute

this commission to his master's satisfaction.

Aretas had scarcely settled this matter, when a letter was delivered to him from lord R——. It enclosed one from England, which his lordship stated to have arrived with some dispatches for him brought by a cutter that had anchored that morning in the Mole. Lord R—— added a friendly invitation to Aretas to dine with him on that day.

Aretas scarcely read it, so anxious was he to peruse the letter from his father, as the superscription and seal denoted it to be. It was couched in the usual affectionate terms, but contained nothing that could have been conceived of mo-

ment, by any body, save Aretas, who read the following lines repeatedly, and each time seemed better satisfied with them, “The girls are still at Ryde with Mrs. Allenby; they are quite delighted with the place, and live a very gay life. Their chief beau and constant attendant I understand is sir Frederic Raymond, whom you no doubt remember at our county meetings. I should by no means regret to add, that one of your sisters was the object of attraction, as sir Frederic is a most desirable connection, but I gather from their letters that he is the devoted slave of their fair companion. *A propos of slavery*, it was an odd chance that threw you on board the same ship with my old friend lord Shurgrove and his lovely daughter. I should not be surprised to

hear you were as firmly fixed in bondage as any unfortunate fellow at the galleys. *Constancy* at nineteen or twenty, could only be commanded by such an object as Miss Clarendon."

A glow of joy warmed Aretas as he read and re-read these lines. Delighted with the place—leading a gay life—receiving the constant homage of sir Frederic Raymond, a young man formed to excite a reciprocal attachment, and one to whom (in this instance) Aretas would most willingly have resigned the superiority in attractions. Surely Constance must have ceased to think of her early love! and this thought, which would once have made him miserable, Aretas now indulged with the utmost

satisfaction ; while the subsequent observation relative to Victoria, he thought, evinced his father to be a man most profoundly versed in the knowledge of the human heart, and of infallible judgment. He exulted in the tribute of admiration paid to his beloved, and triumphed in a passion that promised to be the bane of his existence. He forgot that sir Henry was ignorant of the serious protestations he had vowed to Constance, and by which his honour was involved in a manner his father would have been the first to *guarantee*, had he been aware of the circumstances.

Aretas disregarded too sir Henry's silence respecting any encouragement Constance might have given sir Frederic,

in short, at this moment, he believed every thing that he wished, nor would admit a thought to check the sudden hope that burst upon him. His mind, weary of wretchedness, eagerly admitted any idea that could ameliorate the anguish that for the two last days had distracted it.

Lewis now entered to ask for the answer to lord R——'s letter, saying that a person awaited it. Aretas, who had entirely forgotten that it was necessary, desired the servant might no longer be detained, for that he would send an answer, and fearing that it might again escape his memory, he soon after sat down to write an excuse for not accepting the invitation to dine, feeling wholly

unfit for society. He was interrupted by the entrance of a party of young men, who came to pay him a visit. They were some of the Sicilian nobility, with two or three British officers of rank. Expecting no visitors, Aretas had not ordered himself to be denied, which he now much regretted. He found all the gentlemen prepared to rally him on his sudden seclusion, while they accused him of a wish to keep his place of abode a secret. He parried their attack, by declaring that he had mentioned at lord R——'s his intention of taking up his residence where they had now found him.

“ You, of course, dine at lord R——’s to-day,” cried one of the gentlemen,

"No," returned Aretas, "I am just writing to excuse myself." "How! all the world is to be there?" "For that very reason I don't wish to go." "I understand Miss Clarendon honours the party with her presence," said another archly, when several immediately rejoined, "Oh! certainly, undoubtedly, I have heard it from various quarters."

Aretas coloured deeply, convinced that they suspected his predilection, and thought by making him believe Miss Clarendon was to be there, to induce him to go to lord R---'s. "I believe you are mistaken," returned he, affecting to speak with indifference, "for lord Shurgrove is too unwell to permit Miss Clarendon to leave him." "Aye, that

is true," cried one, " I heard this morning that he was extremely ill, and denied admittance to all visitors."

" That may be," said another, " but I can assure you, his daughter is to be at lord R——'s." All the rest joined in asserting this, and Aretas, a good deal annoyed, made a vigorous effort to change the subject, and talked (as he often had done before) of his intended tour ; and, addressing the Sicilians, he expressed a hope that some of them might be induced to join him when once he had fixed the time, as it would be particularly agreeable to be accompanied by some of the natives. One of them returned, " Why did you not go with di Velino, he set

off this very morning for the *Val Demoni**. He would have been a good one to have pointed out to you the wonders of Etna. I should not be surprised to hear that he had thrown himself, like a second Empedocles, into the crater, where he very probably might have taken you with him. I strongly suspect he is gone off in despair, his high spirit could not brook the indifference of your lovely country-woman. Report says she has rejected him; on whose account we cannot pretend to guess." Here they all began

* That part of the island where Etna stands has been named *Il Val Demoni*, from the devils which were supposed, by the common people, still to inhabit the mountain.

laughing, and Aretas, (though rejoicing at the piece of news the last speaker had imparted,) was very glad to get rid of them, as he could ill conceal the confusion their raillery excited.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARETAS finished the note to lord R—— and dispatched it, yet had no sooner done so, than he began to repent it. These young men (with the exception of one of them, who had said lord Shurgrove was extremely ill) had all so positively asserted that Victoria was to grace the party, that though Aretas thought it very improbable, he did not feel perfectly assured that they must be

mistaken, and he almost wished he had consented to go.

The letter from his father, and the intelligence respecting Allioni, had made a new creature of him, and he considered the gloom and despair that had lately oppressed him, quite unreasonable. "Why should we meet misfortune?" thought Aretas, "is it not much better to anticipate happiness and endeavour to persuade ourselves that every thing will happen as we wish? It is time enough to be wretched when reduced to a state of actual hopelessness!"

The influence of these soothing ideas accelerated the progress of time, and as soon as the approach of evening had

in some measure decreased the oppressive heat of the atmosphere, he sat out on his favourite walk along the shore, nor did he stop to meditate, till he found himself beneath the terrace of Sanseverino. “ Victoria is certainly at lord R——’s,” thought he, “ there cannot be a doubt of it, after their asserting it so repeatedly. Lord Shurgrove too, is extremely unwell, common politeness, nay humanity demands that I should inquire after him. My visit, no doubt, will be peculiarly acceptable in the absence of his daughter, and since she is from home, this will be no infringement of my resolution of avoiding her presence for a stated period ! My declining to go to lord R——’s was sufficient proof of the stability of my determination, and a

sacrifice greater than I conceived myself capable of making. I have now an opportunity of convincing lord Shurgrove his attentions have not been thrown away on an ungrateful object, and that I experience an interest for his welfare, independent of his affinity to the loveliest being in existence."

Thus voluntarily deluding himself, Aretas passed thro' the ruined arch, and proceeded along the terrace, yet every moment he became less satisfied with the arguments by which he had endeavoured to blind himself to his real design, of ascertaining whether or not Victoria was at home, and if she were, to permit himself the delight of beholding her for a few moments. He frequently stopped, and again

proceeded, but on drawing near to the villa, his heart palpitated, his face glowed, and completely ashamed of his excessive weakness and instability, he suddenly turned and retraced part of the way with rapidity, yet not half so quickly, as after again stopping (and observing that the increasing shades of night rendered more perceptible the bright beams of a resplendent moon) he hurried once more towards the villa, as he thought, "It is now too late to pay a visit, I will merely inquire after his lordship of his attendants.

Ere he entered the light colonade that extended along the front of the house, Aretas caught a view of the windows of the apartment where lord Shurgrove usually sat of an evening: they were open to

the ground, and by advancing a few steps in that direction he could discern the interior; but this he thought not of attempting, till the soft strains of the harp struck in a peculiar manner, producing a wild and melancholy symphony, saluted his ear.

The heavenly form his eyes now rested on seemed invested with more than its ordinary powers of enchantment; a new charm enveloped it; that of the most serious tenderness. It beamed in the eyes that cast their softened rays to heaven; it spoke in the pale langour that marked her delicate features; and above all, in the pathetic chords of her harp as she struck them in unison with the pensive melancholy of her thoughts. How completely

did the placid moon-beams that played on the glittering strings, or rested on the thoughtful countenance of her who touched them, harmonize with this picture, and perfect its effect.

Aretas moved not, scarcely did he breathe ! every other faculty was absorbed in sight and hearing. In a tremulous voice Victoria attempted to accompany the affecting strains that went straight to the heart; but in vain, the sound died on her lips as the tears suffused her eyes, and she continued to play as large drops trickled down her cheeks. Then did the very soul of Aretas seem dissolved in tenderness, and wholly overpowered by such a sight, accompanied by sounds that might have melted the hardest heart, he

lost all command of himself, and rushing forward he sunk on one knee before Victoria, as he exclaimed in the suffocated voice of expressive feeling, "O Angel! cease, if you would not quite deprive me of my senses!"

The start of terror, and extreme disorder of Victoria, occasioned by his unexpected appearance, as well as by the manner in which he had thrown himself before her, and the words he had uttered, instantly recalled Aretas to a sense of his situation, and the impropriety of what he had done. But this did not tend to decrease the confusion that overwhelmed him. His attitude of adoration had been but the act of a moment, and he now stood before the trembling, blushing Vic-

toria, vainly attempting to find language expressive of an apology for the alarm he had caused her. For what excuse could he make, or how account for it? while forbidden to confess to her the nature of that emotion, which had overwhelmed his reason, and precipitated him into her presence with an exclamation so expressive of his feelings. After various unsuccessful efforts to speak he sunk on a seat in violent agitation, and covering his face with his hands he remained silent for some moments.

Victoria summoned all her self-possession, and succeeded in recovering some degree of composure. Aretas's present behaviour was a confirmation of all her suspicions, or why did he not avail him-

self of the opportunity of pursuing a theme it might be said he had actually commenced. Vexed and offended at his violence and inconsistency, she arose with the intention of leavingt he room, as she said, “ This unexpected visit at so late an hour, I own surprises me, but as doubtless it was intended for my father, I will inform him that—”

Aretas interrupted her: never before had she addressed him in such chilling, resentful language ; never before had she appeared seriously offended with him, and he felt hurt to the soul, and eager to exculpate himself from the semblance of impropriety, he cried “ yes, yes, it was so ! I did indeed intend inquiring for his lordship, but never dreamt of intruding myself

on either him or you, at such an hour. But—but—O! what apology can I make for my conduct, but to own I am not master of my actions. The charm of harmony, the—the—O! *all* together my senses were bewildered—they are so still,” he added in extreme disorder, as he rapidly traversed the apartment to and fro, pressing his hands to his forehead.

Victoria would have approached the door, but again he arrested her progress “You are offended,” cried he most justly offended, and O! ‘tis more than I can bear, forgive me Victoria! lovely as beloved, as beloved by *all* who ever knew you,” he added checking the avowal that trembled on his lips. “O! pardon me” he continued catching her hand, “par-

don me! I—I—I cannot speak, I must not express,” his voice shook, his face glowed, “I—I; O read, dive, penetrate into my inmost soul Victoria!—” suddenly dropping her hand, he added in vehement accents “leave me, leave me, in mercy fly from me, or I shall utter all I feel.”

Victoria, who had been completely softened by his excessive emotion, and the violent struggle he appeared to undergo, was again moved to resentment by his concluding words, which she thought implied that her presence failed to inspire him with that respect and veneration, which should have sealed his lips on every subject she ought not to hear: and as she retired, she said—“I leave you sir, and only regret that you would not per-

mit me to do so before you had convinced me of the little respect you entertain for me." With these words Victoria quitted the room, leaving Aretas more wretched than ever. How did he repent the weakness that had led him to seek her presence, in which he now found he was totally unable to command himself, but every other idea was superseded by the thoughts of her resentment: and dead to all inferior considerations, he remained on the spot where she had left him, till aroused by the entrance of a footman with lights, who said, as he put them down, "My lord, sir, will be with you immediately."

Aretas started, he had no expectation of seeing lord Shurgrove, concluding that

he was not visible, but finding he could not avoid it, he endeavoured to collect his disordered ideas. He concluded that Victoria had caused his lordship to be apprized of his visit, and he derived some portion of consolation from the reflection that *that* was no symptom of violent displeasure. This thought, more than any thing else, gave him spirits to receive lord Shurgrove in such a manner as prevented his suspecting that any thing extraordinary had recently occurred.

CHAPTER IX.

HIS lordship was much gratified when Aretas ascribed his late visit to his having heard that his indisposition had increased: he insisted on his reseating himself, nor would permit him to depart, which he seemed anxious to do.

"But where is Victoria?" asked his lordship, "I thought she had been with you."

Aretas coloured deeply as he answered, "Miss Clarendon was here sir when I first entered, she has only just left the room."

"She has not been well since you were here last," said lord Shurgrove, "she complains of the head ache. This excessive heat neither agrees with her or me. I feel the oppressive weight of the atmosphere sensibly increased within this half hour, the sky is clouded over, I think we shall have a thunder storm, the lightning has been more than usually vivid this evening." "Then, you must permit me to be gone," cried Aretas, "or I may perhaps be caught in the storm."

"Indeed you shall not go," said his

lordship, “I do not think it safe you should return unattended at so late an hour, I must insist on your taking a bed here to-night.”

Aretas begged to be excused, and persisted in declining, till lord Shurgrove grew quite angry, and exclaimed captiously “You are not a bit like your father; he is the best tempered man in the world and so cheerful! always ready to oblige, and eager to enter into the pleasures of society; but you are the most obstinate, headstrong boy I ever met with! You will repent it some of these days, or I am very much mistaken.”

“*Repent it,*” echoed Aretas with a deep sigh, as he thought his lordship’s prophecy

already fulfilled, "I do indeed!" "Then you will stay!" rejoined lord Shurgrove, affecting to believe that Aretas alluded to what was passing, tho' he was convinced his thoughts had carried him much further back: while Aretas rejoicing that his lordship had not put a just interpretation on the words that had escaped him undesignedly, no longer persisted in a resolution it had cost him some difficulty to retain so long. He had felt wretched at the thoughts of quitting Sanseverino without again seeing Victoria, while he imagined, if he could but ascertain that he still retained her good opinion, and that she was no longer offended with him, he should be able to resolve on immediately flying from Palermo, and on never again beholding her till convinced that the

hopes engendered by the intelligence conveyed in his father's letter were not fallacious.

He felt more comfortable, when once resolved on remaining at Sanseverino for that night; but he regretted it, when Victoria sent a message to excuse herself from re-appearing, on the plea of being slightly indisposed. He naturally imputed her absenting herself to her displeasure against him, tho' lord Shurgrove said with an air of concern, that proved he thought this no subterfuge," "I am quite uneasy about my child; she has gone to bed early these two nights; a sure proof that she is very unwell. If she is not better to-morrow I shall insist on her having some advice." His lordship fell

into a thoughtful mood, at which Aretas rejoiced, as he had never been less inclined for conversation.

An elegant collation was removed from before them almost untouched, when Aretas was informed by one of the attendants that a person without requested to speak with him. Much surprised, he arose, while lord Shurgrove proposed that the person should be called in, but Aretas declined this, and followed the servant, who informed him, that the man refused to enter but waited under the piazza, whither Aretas immediately repaired, marvelling who it could be that had thus evidently traced him to Sanseverino.

Having reached the door, he took a

— survey of the piazza, but could not perceive any body ; he stepped out and traversed it to the farthest end, when he saw a man looking anxiously in different directions, as if to descry if any one was approaching, and who, on perceiving him, ran eagerly towards him ; and Aretas recognised Lewis, who appeared to be in some agitation, as he cried, “ O, sir, I am so glad to see you.” “ Lewis !” exclaimed his master in astonishment,—“ what brought you here ? and how did you find me out ?”

“ O, sir, I will tell you all about that by and bye, but I hope sir you are not going home to-night, it is very late sir.” “ No, I shall remain here till to-morrow morning. But what induced you to seek me ?”

"Why I was a little alarmed, sir, at your staying out so late, so I thought I had better come and meet you. I told Signora Bogia I thought you would not return to-night sir, so she won't expect us."

Aretas had never once recollectcd that his remaining out all night, would excite alarm in his domestic (or that he would doubtless sit up in expectation of him) for his mind had been completely occupied with other subjects. He was convinced by Lewis's unusual manner that some extraordinary apprehension had been excited in his breast, and he determined not to send him back alone; he therefore bade him enter into the house, while he himself rejoined lord Shur-

grove, and informed him of the motive which had induced his servant to repair to Sanseverino, when his lordship begged he would detain him; and Lewis was sumptuously regaled by the domestics, and a bed prepared for his accommodation.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Aretas retired to the chamber allotted him he sat down to ruminate on his proximity to Victoria ; but he was not permitted to pursue his cogitations, which were interrupted by the entrance of Lewis. " I don't want you, Lewis !" said his master, " you may go to bed."

" If you please sir, I should be glad to speak to you," said the domestic, closing

the door with an air of mystery, and advancing into the apartment, as he continued, "I was in such a flurry when first I came, sir, I hardly knew how to begin, but indeed I have been very much alarmed about you this evening."

"How, on what account?"

"Why sir, I'll tell you. It was about ten o'clock I think, or it might be more; and having nothing particular to do, I was walking up and down before the door, and thinking that it was getting late, and it began to cloud over as if there was going to be bad weather; I went a little way along the shore, in hopes of seeing you coming back, sir, as I knew you had walked out that way. I had

not gone far, when I heard some one walking very fast behind me ; and looking back, I saw a figure all in black, and I own I felt a little startlish at first, it looked so gloomy, and as it was a woman, it seemed more ghostly, sir ; I should not have minded half a dozen stout fellows, just in common men's cloaths, but all them dark things wrapping about, to be sure looked very terrible. And so, sir, I got out of the way directly, that she might pass by, but she seemed in a troublous taking, and began chattering Italian as fast as she could ; and pointing before, and looking behind, and making all manner of motions, and seemed almost in a fit because I could not understand her. But at last I could make out the words, *vóstro maestro, vóstro*

maestro; which she kept saying over and over again, and that I knew meant, *your master, your master*, and all of a sudden I was frightened to death, for I thought that she must know who I was, and meant you, sir, and I kept crying out as loud as I could, ‘Where is he? what am I to do? what has happened to him, to my *maestro*,’ and I believe she guessed by my manner what I meant, for she drew me on by one arm, as she repeated, *Sanseverino, Sanseverino*; then, to be sure, I understood that she meant I should come here, and I sat out running to shew I would go as hard as I could: then I understood by her motions that I was right, and she jabbered something very quick, and seemed as if she wanted me to fly, but I could only make out

ammazzó or *ammazzato*, or something like that; and as I hurried forward I thought to myself I had heard that word very often before, and to be sure I thought I should have dropped down when it struck me I had heard the servants say it when they were going to kill the poultry, and one of them one day made me understand that it meant to kill, or something about killing; so when I put the words together, *vóstro maestro Sanseverino ammazzo*, I could not but think they meant somebody was killing my master at Sanseverino, and I ran till I thought I should have burst, and when I got to the door here, I had hardly breath to ask for you, and when the man told me you were safe and sound in the parlour with my lord, I fell a

crying, like a fool, and went away from the door for fear he should see me."

Lewis's voice had trembled so during the latter part of his relation, that he could scarcely proceed. He brushed his arm across his eyes and made many wry faces, and as Aretas pressed his hand on his arm, and with eyes glistening with gratitude, called him his kind, good Lewis, the poor fellow (who felt for him the affection of a father) was quite overcome, and encircling the youth in his arms, he sobbed out, " My dear, dear young master ! to think that any of those rascally Sicily-men should stick my own beautiful boy, that would have been a match for a dozen of them when

he was no more than a child if they had dared attack him fairly and openly. Oh ! who would have told it to sir Henry, I would have died first an hundred times."

Lewis had actually worked himself into an agony at the bare idea of what might have happened, and it was some time before either he or his master could resume their composure ; when Lewis said, " Oh ! sir, what a good ghost that was to warn me of your danger, for to be sure something very dreadful would have happened if you had attempted to go home to night, and nothing but a spirit could be able to forewarn one of danger, you know, sir."

"The spirit of humanity, I believe, Lewis, is the only one permitted to interfere on such occasions, and may have instigated some compassionate being to whom accident might have revealed — but what am I saying? This is attaching more consequence to this business than it probably deserves."

"Lord! sir, can any thing in the world be of more consequence than your life? only think of sir Henry, sir, and my lady and ——"

"Believe me, my good fellow, I value it as I ought, but I am inclined to think that all this alarm has originated in misapprehension. You could understand but a very few words of what this fe-

male said, and the purport of her whole address may have been very different from what you concluded it."

"Why, sir, don't those words mean what I said they did?"

"Yes, but I have before seen a person resembling the description you give of this female, who, I think is in distress. She may have been imploring you to intercede with your *maestro* to procure her relief; perhaps she knows that I frequent Sanseverino, and was aware that I was here, and that may have occasioned her to mention the name of this place."

"Well, sir, but what could she mean
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about killing, and why should she want me to hasten here?"

"Perhaps she was telling you that her husband had been killed, and that she was left in great distress! It is impossible by those single words to understand the exact meaning of all she said, which could only be rendered perfectly intelligible by comprehending the intermediate sentences."

"Ah! sir, you always make light of your own danger."

Aretas, on reflection, was more and more convinced that very little weight ought to be attached to this occurrence, for if a plan to attack him was in agi-

tation, it was very unlikely any female should be admitted into the secret, particularly one who appeared possessed of so much sensibility. It was possible, accident might have revealed it to her ! but he felt inclined to reject the idea altogether, and it speedily faded on his imagination before the imperious recollection of the recent scene with Victoria, whose image filled his whole soul ; and he neither thought nor dreamt of personal danger, while Lewis retired with his mind full of the evening's adventure, and sleeping or waking, his apprehensions for the object of his solicitude conjured up bravos, assassins and apparitions that haunted him the live-long night.

CHAPTER XI.

PLEASURE was certainly predominant in Victoria's breast, when she heard that Aretas was to remain at Sanseverino till the next day. Her resentment had been short-lived, and all gave way before the conviction, that whatever there might be to censure in his conduct, it was but too evident he was perfectly miserable. Her heart instantaneously softened towards him at this suggestion, and she felt how.

difficult would be the task of supporting that reserve and semblance of disapprobation, in her manner towards him, which she was sensible it was essential she should maintain at the present crisis.

She had been unable to meet him again that evening in the way she ought to have done, (and which, indeed, could not have failed to have excited lord Shurgrove's observation) but aware that she must encounter him at breakfast next morning, she endeavoured to prepare her mind to meet him as propriety required, while she hoped that any seeming strangeness in her manner, would be imputed by her father to recent indisposition. But a better excuse was furnished her by the arrival of the long expected and

much dreaded *Sirocco*, that seemed to possess the power of annihilating every particle of energy in the human frame, while its influence over the minds of many persons is little inferior. Such were its effects on lord Shurgrove, who, in his night-gown and slippers, with difficulty crawled from his chamber to the outer apartment, where, extended on a sopha, he felt absolutely dissolving. The window-shutters were kept closed and all the usual precautions taken to exclude every breath of the suffocating atmosphere without, while the attendants sprinkled water and refreshing perfumes about the room, in order to produce an artificial coolness.

“ The first blast of this dreadful wind

on the face," has been compared by Mr. Brydone, "to the burning stream from the mouth of an oven ! and in sheltered situations, where it is not felt to such an excess, to the subterraneous sweating stoves at Naples, but still much hotter :" But no one ever exposes themselves to it unless compelled, nor is a creature to be seen stirring abroad while it prevails.

Victoria was endeavouring to soothe her father's querulous complaints when Aretas joined them at breakfast. Any particular salutation between them was prevented by lord Shurgrove's exclaiming the moment he beheld Aretas, " Oh ! this infernal *Sirocco* ! Mansfield, it will be the death of me. My only conso-

lation is, that you can't stir while it lasts."

" You are very kind, my lord, but I must attempt it after breakfast."

" Attempt it! are you mad? D—n it boy! you put me in such a passion, I am ready to expire."

Aretas apologized, declaring he would do exactly as his lordship chose. He perceived he was in a state of the most painful irritation, and unable to bear the smallest opposition, nor could the united efforts of his daughter and Aretas, (who devoted their whole attention to him, and which dissipated the awkward sensations they mutually experienced)

succeed in affording him the smallest satisfaction. He found fault with every thing they did, contradicted every word they said, and had no other reason existed to detain him at Sanseverino, Aretas could hardly have determined on leaving Victoria to sustain the whole brunt of his lordship's ill humour. It was now alternately vented on them both, and Victoria found an excuse for permitting her manner to soften towards Aretas, in order to make amends for her father's rudeness.

Aretas, in the most gentle and conciliating tone, appealed to his lordship, to request his opinion on some philosophical question regarding the state of the atmosphere, when he returned, im-

patiently, “ I wish you would talk to each other, and let me alone, it is too great a fatigue to speak.”

Thus called on, each endeavoured to hide their confusion by attempting to start some general subject, and Victoria asked Aretas if he had ever, in traversing the grounds of Sanseverino, perceived the cavern sacred to St. Rosolia ? He replied in the negative, when she described it to him, and also mentioned the door that she had discovered, adding that she had since found it led to a passage communicating with the neighbouring monastery. A servant had been sent to examine where it conducted to the day after she had visited the grotto, but he found the door locked. Lord Shurgrove

had then written a note to the Abbot concerning it, to which the latter had replied, stating that the door led from a passage, by which the fraternity were in the habit of repairing to pay their devotions at the shrine of St. Rosolia; but that no inconvenience could accrue to his lordship, or his family, on that account, as none but the holy fathers passed that way, and the door was constantly locked after them.

Notwithstanding this assurance, Victoria felt that her wanderings must be circumscribed, but as there was a stronger necessity for their being restricted to the most public part of the grounds than the dread of meeting a disciple

of abstinence and mortification, she the less regretted *this*.

She made the grotto of Saint Rosolia the theme of conversation till it was quite exhausted, and Aretas found himself called on to introduce a new subject, and being most anxious to ascertain if Victoria had seen di Velino before his departure, he said, “ I was surprised to hear the count di Velino had left Palermo ! did you know it ? ”

Victoria’s heart beat quick ; she had now an opportunity of discovering whether the count had really had an interview with Aretas. Hesitating a moment, she replied “ I knew he intended going ! ” “ You saw him then before he went ? ”

cried Aretas, speaking with rapidity, and casting on her a glance of eager inquiry. “ I did !” returned Victoria, looking steadily at him, and added in a firm and serious tone, “ He mentioned having recently paid you a visit !”

Aretas’s face became scarlet, his eyes fell to the ground, but he spoke not; and Victoria continued, “ I doubted it, knowing you were not on visiting terms ; but perhaps I wronged the count’s veracity !”

Aretas now said, without raising his eyes, “ He presumed to intrude on me for a few minutes.”

“ He probably wished to convince

you he bore you no enmity, and was desirous of bidding you a friendly farewell!"

"*Friendly!*" repeated Aretas, and added, "whatever were his motives for seeking me, I am sure he went away convinced I thought him a most unwelcome visitor!"

"No," said Victoria, "I do not think so, for he mentioned you in terms of gratitude and esteem, and professed himself for ever indebted to you."

"For what?" cried Aretas, as every particle of colour fled his cheeks, and his features assumed a wild and terrified aspect as he fixed his eyes on Victoria, to

whom he doubted not Allioni had repeated the substance of their conversation in the most aggravated terms. The glow of resentment lighted up Victoria's countenance, and her eyes flashed fire, as she turned them from him, anxious to conceal their expression, while her swelling heart felt as if it would have burst, as she admitted the truth of every thing di Velino had asserted, for she read a full confirmation of it in the disordered looks of Aretas. They were also apparent to lord Shurgrove, though he reclined at the further end of the apartment, and was too distant to hear what they said, as they conversed in a low tone. Aretas repeated, " For what ? for what should di Velino be grateful to me ? "

" Mansfield !" cried his lordship, " what ails you, you are as pale as death ?" Aretas started up, declared the oppression of the atmosphere had quite overcome him and hastened out of the room, fully convinced by Victoria's aspect, and her delaying to reply to him, that his worst apprehensions were verified, while he left her impressed with a similar persuasion.

CHAPTER XII.

MOST wretchedly did that day pass to all parties, while every sensation was aggravated by the state of the weather. Aretas excused himself from re-appearing during the morning, and as it was scarcely possible to support the usual cloathing he had a good plea for secluding himself. He passed the time in fortifying his resolution of tearing himself at once from Victoria; their two last

interviews had been sufficient to convince him that neither peace, happiness, nor even temporary comfort, could be the result of his permitting himself the indulgence of her society under his present circumstances, and to go he felt resolved.

Towards evening the wind almost suddenly changed and blew strong from the sea, a brisk tramontane (north wind), producing so strong a reverse to the late heat, that lord Shurgrove had now the windows closed to keep him warm, and wrapped himself up, as if it had been the middle of winter. However the change had a most salutary effect on his nerves, and his ill-humour vanished. Even Victoria felt lighter, though labour-

ing under so severe a cause of unhappiness: again pity, instead of anger, took possession of her breast, and her heart bled for the anguish she was conscious she had so considerably augmented by probing the wound, which as she had first inflicted it, she thought, at least demanded her deepest commiseration.

When Aretas joined them at the evening collation, he resolved to make known his intention of immediately quitting Palermo. Victoria received him with a gentleness and benignity he had not expected, and it rendered the task he had imposed on himself, infinitely more distressing.

After congratulating lord Shurgrove

on the change in the weather, Aretas continued, " I shall take the cool of the morning's dawn to quit your hospitable habitation, my lord. I think the weather will now prove favourable for my long projected tour, which I am resolved not to delay.

" You astonish me ! " cried his lordship, " I thought you did not intend going for some time. Surely this is a sudden resolution ! " Aretas did not immediately reply : his eyes were fixed on Victoria's face. He had never before beheld it so pale, tho' she forced a sickly smile, as she stooped to caress her lap dog. His lordship added " And when do you think of setting off ? "

"As soon as possible. I must go at once, or I shall perhaps be tempted to change my resolution."

"But we shall see you again before you depart?"

"I fear not," returned Aretas, coughing to disguise the faltering of his voice.

Victoria still appeared engrossed with her dog, but Aretas thought he could perceive a tear glistening through her long eye-lash, and he added with rapidity, "at least *if* I should depart as soon as I expect, I may not again have the pleasure of repairing to Sanseverino, but *if* I do not, I certainly—" Victoria raised her hand to her forehead and seemed to be

playing with the ringlets of her hair, but Aretas saw the crystal gem fall on the little animal, who was looking affectionately in her face, and softened to an oppressive degree, he scarcely could command his voice to add “but no *doubt* I shall see you *often* again. Indeed I am quite undecided—it most probably will be some time yet before I go.”

Lord Shurgrove laughed, and Aretas could almost believe he understood his feelings ; his face glowed, and in order to hide his confusion, he affected to join in the laugh with his lordship, and rising with a playful air, re-seated himself on a little foot-stool of Victoria’s, and endeavoured to attract her dog from her to play with it. The animal wagged his tail

and seemed half inclined to come to him, but still kept by his mistress. “Fidèle, Fidèle,” cried she, “will you leave me?” “Fidèle, Fidèle,” repeated lord Shurgrove, who seemed much inclined to mirth “why, who are you speaking to Victoria? O, you have got your dog there, I really thought you were addressing *Mansfield*, and had new named him! how justly I cannot pretend to say,”

Victoria was little less confused by this speech than was Aretas, who appeared to be laughing at his lordship’s wit; but as he felt himself at that moment completely the butt of it, and was overwhelmed with the consciousness of how little he merited the name he had affected to think applied to him, it might be said that his

was, "a laughter in which the heart was sorrowful; but it became more genuine when his lordship added, (pretending to be alluding to the dog), "However Victoria, you see *Fidèle* is not inclined to *quit you*, whoever else he may wander from; so *you* may assert that he is appropriately named."

Aretas now ventured to say, "He must be a strange animal indeed, who could wander from *such a mistress*."

"His fidelity has never been tried," cried Victoria, "and I feel very little dependence on it, as he is of that sex in which I believe inconstancy is almost inherent."

"O eye!" exclaimed lord Shurgrove,
"Mansfield assist me, I beg, to support
our cause."

"Indeed, my lord, I should prove but
a feeble auxiliary, from not feeling satisfied
with the justice of it! I have somewhere
read of a conceit extremely congenial to
my feeling on that subject."

"And pray what is it?"

The poet imagines that our souls come forth in pairs from the hands of the Creator, who gives them to the Zephyrs to bear them to this nether world; and if they reach it in safety, and again encounter, they instantaneously impel the bodies they animate towards each other, and an

hymeneal union is the consequence ; and that being the original design of their author, must necessarily prove happy. But as from the length of way (in which, you may naturally suppose, many storms, obstacles and other impediments arise to check their progress) they are generally separated in the descent, their re-union of course is very rare, while the forming an alliance with any but the original counterpart, being, as it were an extraneous connection, must inevitably prove productive of misery. Now you know, my lord, from the inexperience of youth, or erroneousness of our judgments, we may sometimes *fancy* we have met with this counterpart and persuade ourselves that the sentiment we encourage is *love*, but we must necessarily discover our mis-

take when the real partner of our souls presents herself; we must feel a secret affinity, an irresistible link that binds one to *her* for ever! but this should not be termed *inconstancy*, nay wholly the *reverse*, for it is an indisputable evidence that the soul could never continue an alien to its original celestial companion."

Aretas spoke with all that animation and energy which invariably attends the consciousness that what we are saying is applicable to ourselves. Lord Shurgrove could not forbear laughing heartily at the enthusiasm of Aretas's manner, nor could Victoria repress a smile which had more of sympathy and affection in it than ridicule, while his lordship exclaimed, " You are an admirable sophist Mansfield! I

could not pretend to enter into the lists with you: your flowery imagery would completely overwhelm my steady reasoning. I would advise you by all means to become the founder of a fraternity, or sect, who with you at their head, might perambulate the world, in search of their *counterparts.* ’

“I would not stir an inch with them!” cried Aretas with vivacity. He still kept his place on the little *tabouret* near Victoria’s feet, and had no sooner uttered those words than he seized Fidele and began caressing him with some violence, nor ventured to look up for a few moments, dreading that the just interpretation would be given to what had escaped him and when he again caught a glance at Victo-

ria, the blush which had not yet subsided on her cheek, convinced him she understood his real meaning.

Her manner towards him for the remainder of the evening was rather tender than severe, and Aretas was happy till he beheld her no more, when in the solitude of his chamber his actual circumstances again presented themselves to his mind, aggravated by the consciousness of his extreme irresolution; while a single glance of Victoria's eye, could not only shake, but destroy his firmest resolve. Peace was banished from his bosom, and with the earliest dawn (attended by Lewis) he quitted the villa, *half* determined never to re-enter it again.

CHAPTER XIII.

MEANTIME Victoria slumbered sweetly; fully persuaded that the excess of affection Aretas had betrayed for her, would not permit him to leave her, she resigned herself to the most pleasing illusions of hope. All other evils were light in comparison to the misery of being separated from him for ever: she tried to persuade herself some happy change might occur to render their attachment

prosperous, and experienced temporary felicity in the idea, that she should still continue to enjoy his society. Her father's conduct, she could not understand : that he saw and approved of Aretas's attachment to her, was sufficiently evident ! but she wondered that he should so decidedly encourage it, while a sort of mystery seemed to seal the lips of Mansfield on the subject of his love : and she could not doubt that he had some entanglement, from his strenuous support of *second* attachments, and various other circumstances.

Aretas, in the silence and privacy of his apartments at Signora Bogia's, indulged all his ruminations on the side of reason. It was plain Lord Shurgrove had

no conception that he (Aretas) was seriously engaged ! What would he think of him, when, (though betraying so strong a passion for Victoria) he still delayed openly to declare himself ? What would Victoria herself think of him ? Sometimes he thought of disclosing his whole heart to her, and candidly acknowledging his situation, as the only means of accounting for his inconsistency ; and throwing himself wholly on her clemency, solicit her friendship and esteem, as the only solace his destiny would admit of. Even if she banished him for ever from her presence, he should still have the satisfaction of reflecting that he had not deluded *her*. Then again he thought of explaining his situation to Lord Shurgrove, who was, in part, pre-

pared for such an avowal as he should be compelled to make ; but he dreaded his severe resentment, and felt less apprehensive of making a confidant of Victoria herself, which he at length resolved to do, if he felt *incapable* of executing his intention of quitting Palermo. On that point he was continually fluctuating, and almost wished that some one would come and take him away by force, without consulting either his will or inclinations. His meditations were interrupted by the precipitate opening of the door by Lewis, who, to his master's great surprise ushered in—“ Captain Allenby !”

“ My uncle ?” exclaimed Aretas, starting forward [to receive him, which he did with some confusion, from the idea that

Captain Allenby must be surprised to find him still at Palermo, but he was relieved on that head by his uncle's saying—"I am very glad to find you here, my dear boy ! I fully expected you would have been off on your travels, in which case I should have been placed in a very unpleasant predicament, owing to an unexpected change in my destination, which I must now inform you is direct for England!"

"For *England!*!" echoed Aretas, in dismay, "is your ship ordered for England so soon?"

"It is; to my great astonishment ! There were some dispatches of consequence which the commander in chief in these seas wished to forward to the Lords

of the Admiralty, and as their contents required some explanation, that could be better made by word of mouth, he did me the honour of selecting me as the most proper person to employ on this service, if *service* it can be called. I am sorry it has happened so on your account, as it would have been desirable you should have made a longer stay in this island."

"O, sir!" cried Aretas, "it would be the most ridiculous thing in the world to leave Sicily without having seen the chief objects for which it is famed. Every body would laugh at me. I am sure my father could never wish me to do anything so truly absurd."

“ Why—I don’t know : had Mr. Hartfield been with you, I should not have had the smallest hesitation in proposing your continuing here ; but as Sir Henry, in a manner, confided you to my charge, and seemed to consider it as a thing of course, that you would not be separated from me, and positively mentioned that you were to return to England with me—”

“ Yes, but he imagined it would be at some distant period.”

Well Aretas, I repeat, I am very sorry it has happened so, but I don’t know how I could be justified in acting contrary to sir Henry’s express desire ! and were you to remain behind, and any thing unpleasant

be the result, the whole blame would without doubt fall on me !”

“ Unpleasant !” replied Aretas, who abhorred the very thought of quitting Sicily, “ how could any thing unpleasant result from my remaining to survey the other parts of this island ?” and he added with that petulant vexation created by indulgence, “ There is nothing that could be so unpleasant to me at this moment as quitting Sicily. Such absurdity ! to go home without being able to give an account of a single thing the place is famed for ! besides I cannot go home yet if I do go to England.”

“ Why not ?” asked his uncle, who was ignorant of the cause which banished

Aretas for a stated period from his father's house. The youth was much confused; these words had heedlessly escaped him in the irritation of the moment; he took no notice of his uncle's interrogation, but continued, "I am convinced my father would be very sorry I should leave Sicily."

"I don't know how that may be, but I feel myself very awkwardly situated!"

Both remained silent for some moments, when captain Allenby put his hand in his pocket, saying, "I had a letter from my wife a few days since; she mentions your sisters, and also speaks of your friend Miss Hamilton!"

Aretas was seized with a trembling fit, and he became all ear, while his uncle proceeded to read the letter aloud. It contained an account of various parties and excursions, which Mrs. Allenby and her companions had been engaged in; she said she was delighted with her nieces, who were always pleased with her efforts to amuse them: but she was quite provoked with Miss Hamilton, for she never appeared to enjoy any thing, but was so serious and thoughtful, and unlike other young people, that she (Mrs. Allenby) was convinced she must be violently in love with some absent object, who engrossed her whole mind, and of which she was the more fully persuaded by Constance's extreme indifference to sir Fre-

deric Raymond, who paid her the most flattering attention, and which she repelled with uniform and frigid reserve.

These few lines had the power of placing our hapless and ill-fated Aretas absolutely on the rack. He hastened into the balcony to conceal his disorder from his uncle, who imagined him engaged in looking after some one who had passed, and as captain Allenby refolded the letter, he called to him, "Well, I hope you will make up your mind to go with me!"

"Say no more," cried Aretas, in a voice of suppressed agitation, "I shall accompany you!" "That is right," said his uncle, "and if the wind conti-

nues as it is now, we shall sail early in the morning. You will of course be on board to night; so I will leave you to make your arrangements, while I proceed to pay my compliments to lord Shurgrove; who, I understand, has removed to a place called Sanseverino. I have a carriage waiting to convey me there; I am told he will not admit me, but the compliment will be the same."

"Sanseverino!" repeated Aretas, with a burst of agony, as his uncle quitted the room. He sunk on a seat, clasping his hands together, and wringing them in despair at the dreadful idea that he was now indeed about to be separated from Victoria for ever, and torn from the scene in which alone he seemed to live.

" Oh ! wretched resolution !" murmured Aretas in the low accents of hopeless misery, " wretched resolution ! what hast thou not cost me ? long, long delayed, but now irrevocably fixed, as the horrors of my own inexorable doom ! Constance ! you have a right to me, and all that I can give shall be yours !" His voice failed him, tears burst from his eyes, and he mentally ejaculated, " Victoria, angel of delight ; my heart, my mind, my every thought is thine for ever ! while sense and reason last I'll love, adore, and bless thee ; when this wretched body shall be far, far distant, a worthless offering to another's constancy, a miserable sacrifice to honour ! "

Aretas was not now deluding himself ;

the account he had heard of Constance had awakened all his bitterest self-reproaches, and enabled him at length to form a resolution he justly declared to be irrevocable. The image of Constance consuming her youth in incessant regret for his absence, and fondly nurturing the passion he had taken such pains to augment, rose full on his imagination, at once inspiring a kind of desperate determination, and compelling him to take a step, which nothing else could have enabled him to have resolved upon. An impenetrable gloom took possession of him, and having given orders to Lewis to prepare his baggage, and get every thing embarked as soon as possible, he shut himself up from every eye, and passed the wretched hours in alternately

attempting to address lord Shurgrove and Victoria by letters, which he had no sooner finished than he destroyed them, and remained wholly undetermined, whether or not to seek a parting interview.

CHAPTER XIV.

MEANTIME captain Allenby repaired to Sanseverino : at the moment of his arrival, lady R—— was leaving the villa; she had heard that Victoria was not very well, and had been to pay her a visit. Victoria had accompanied her ladyship to the step of her carriage, and she received captain Allenby under the colonade. He followed her into the house, as she made excuses for her father's being

unable to receive him, and fortunate it was, she had gone through that ceremony before her visiter informed her of the occasion of his sudden return to Palermo, which at once sealed her lips, and blanched her cheek. Almost breathless, she listened to captain Allenby's description of his nephew's extreme reluctance to accompanying him, and his relation of the circumstances that rendered it necessary : but, when he concluded by adding, that Aretas had at length resolved to go, Victoria could with difficulty support herself. She attempted an apology to captain Allenby, purporting that she had been unwell for some time ; while he hastily retired, more than half suspecting the truth.

Oh ! what a day was this to Victoria ! she felt incapable of informing her father of the intelligence captain Allenby had communicated ; she dared not venture into his presence for some hours, during which she continued in momentary expectation of the arrival of Aretas, as she concluded he would doubtless call to bid them farewell, and she endeavoured to fortify herself for so trying an occasion ; encouraging that resentment his conduct was calculated to inspire, and which alone supported her spirits at this painful crisis. Fortunately lord Shurgrove was engaged in an interesting study, and did not require her attendance. She rallied all her courage to meet him at dinner, and as she sat with her back to the light, which was in a great measure obscured

by shades over the windows, the despondency of her countenance, and the traces of her tears, were not perceptible.

Several times she attempted to enter on the painful communication, while the attendants continued in the room, under the idea that their presence would prevent any animadversions from lord Shurgrove ; but vainly she endeavoured to articulate, the words died away on her lips, while his lordship (whose mind was still engrossed with the subject that had occupied it during the morning) remained quite abstracted till he mechanically retired to take his evening *siesta*. And now was Victoria left alone a prey to the increasing violence of feelings nearly bordering on despair, as hour after hour

wore away, and she beheld not Aretas. She almost believed he had resolved to avoid a scene, which, though thought of with the most poignant anguish, was the last ray of consolation left her, the very obsequies of hope, which must for ever die as the last shadow of Aretas receded from her view.

In vain did reason suggest that he who would thus fly from her was unworthy of being regretted, and that the vehemence of her feelings was contrary to sense and rationality ; every spark of spirit and resentment died away before the agonizing idea of no more beholding Aretas. She traversed the apartment with the hurried step of extreme agitation, while from time to time, she stopped before

the windows, looking anxiously as far as her eyes could reach, in the lingering hope of beholding the being whose figure was so perfectly imaged in her mind, that she could almost fancy she beheld it advancing, while torrents of tears gushed from her eyes, as she reflected, " Soon, soon, nay, perhaps even now ! shall the ideal object be all that I have left ? vainly shall my aching eyes stretch to yonder arch, while fancy pictures his graceful form passing the colonade and advancing with light, yet majestic steps ! Vainly shall I recal the bright lustre of his sparkling eye that spoke a rapturous welcome, and think I hear the gentle voice of tenderness, when—seas shall divide us ! oceans roll between !" She pressed her hand upon her heart that felt as if it

must break, while she continued to reflect how soon the influence of absence would rob her of the power of bringing before her eyes that perfect resemblance, which she could now trace as clearly as if the original actually stood before her, but which, in a little time would grow dim and confused, and be retraced with difficulty, though its power in her heart could know no diminution.

Relentless time, robbing us even of the *ideal* image of those cruelly torn from us, dims by its influence our mental vision, and leaves us but an imperfect representation of the form so loved, so cherished, so regretted. The shades of evening increased: distance was lost in obscurity; till the bright radiance of an unclouded

moon rose on the scene. Victoria long lingered at the window, for the gloom of the apartment seemed like a loathsome dungeon to her, and now scarcely mistress of herself, and oppressed to a degree that made it necessary to seek the air, she stepped out on the terrace and paced to and fro, while the breeze played in the ringlets of her hair, and her white attire shone conspicuous in the moon beams.

The last faint gleam of hope still directed her eyes towards the ruined gateway, and reluctant to turn she had nearly reached it, when the object who engrossed her whole soul, at length appeared. No sooner had he caught sight of her snowy vestments, than he advanced with a rapidity that scarcely allowed her

time to summon some slight degree of apparent composure. Neither were able to speak at the first moment of meeting. Victoria read Aretas's whole heart in the perturbation of his looks, and instantly held out her hand to him, thus, at least relieving him from that portion of his misery arising from the apprehension of her displeasure. He grasped the blessed pledge of peace convulsively between his clay cold hands, chilled by the force of agitation, tho' large drops stood on his forehead, and he almost gasped for breath. At length he articulated, "I am going Victoria!—but you already know it. I read it in this kind commiseration, this tender pity. Victoria averted her face, she could not suppress her tears, but she hoped to conceal them, and said with a

faultering voice, " You are come to bid my father farewell, let us hasten to the house."

" No no, Victoria! I must not expose my weakness to any eyes but yours. Say all you will for me to lord Shurgrove, and"—he hesitated, " and then Victoria, if you deign to feel an interest about me, ask him to tell you all he knows concerning me, it will in some measure account for my apparent inconsistency, and then will you be convinced of the excess of misery I am doomed to, and however you may condemn, you will at least compassionate me. I had thought of writing all I would have said, but found myself incapable, and have dared to seek a parting interview, in the hope of excit-

ing you pity, and obtaining you forgiveness for all the indiscretions I have been hurried into, by the violence of emotions I am forbidden to explain. To imagine that you will sometimes think of me, and class me with those who are blessed with your friendship, is the only amelioration my fate will admit of."

His voice was so choaked with grief, that it was scarcely audible, while the pale hue of fixed despair sat on his features, marked with the lines of perfect wretchedness. Victoria now spoke, as the uncontroulable tears rapidly coursed each other down her wan cheek. " Rest satisfied, you carry with you my fervent wishes for your welfare and happiness. I harbour no resentment against you,

God forbid I should at this awful moment, when we behold each other for the last time, and should even part with the same charity in which we would wish to die with all mankind!"

" You weep Victoria, and O! dreadful is the purport of your words, they have made me feel as if I were this moment on the brink of eternity, and looking for the *last* time on *that* dearest to me on earth ! O ! would that I were ! then would my sufferings be short-lived, all would soon be over, and I should die in peace, while yet my eyes were blessed with the sight of thee, Victoria ! O, I shall see you no more ! but be doomed to drag on existence, deprived of every thing that could render it valuable." He held

her hand to his burning forehead, while she vainly endeavoured to check the violence of her own feelings, in the hope of stemming the torrent of his affliction, which seemed ready to overwhelm his reason. She led him towards the entrance of the domain, as in accents awfully solemn she repeated, “ We must part !—let us not prolong this melancholy scene ! go, Aretas, where duty calls you, and let my idea be for ever banished from your thoughts, if it cannot be reverted to without pain : believe me, absence will not prove so——“ she stopped, for she was about to betray her confidence of the sensations that at present agitated him.

“ I feel, I feel that it will be totally insupportable,” cried Aretas passionately.

"I must leave you" said Victoria in faltering accents, as she reached the ruined arch, and stopped beneath the lofty columns, thro' which the rays of the moon gleamed on their desponding features.

"Surely you will not quit me yet?" exclaimed Aretas in a tone of agony, as he retained her hands with almost frantic fervour. "O, remember! we may never meet again! this is perhaps the *last* request I shall ever make you. Tell me, that when wandering thro' these much loved shades, when I am far away, you will sometimes think of this sad moment, and pity your wretched friend."

"O! I shall often think of you," cried

Victoria, "and now in mercy to us both
pray let me go?"

"Victoria! would you deny a few, few
minutes to an expiring being in the last
sad hour of his existence? and have you
not said that we should part even as if
death now hovered over us, and—"

"O heaven!" exclaimed Victoria with
a start of terror, "what was that moved
in yonder shade? O, I am weak," she
added with a bursting sigh, "your words
are solemn, and impress me awfully—they
fill me with strange terrors—I dread I
know not what—It was but the waving
shadows of the trees, I could have fancied
it a human form,—go, go, dear friend,
O! why prolong this wretched scene?

Heaven bless and prosper you, farewell,
farewell."

"O! no, I *cannot* say farewell," cried Aretas vehemently, "I will return with you, and see you safe, and then—"

"O no, no, no, leave me, leave, I conjure you, I shall speedily reach the house, along the terrace nothing can molest me."

"And must I watch your gradually receding form?" He gazed on her with the utmost excess of tenderness, while tears sprung from his eyes; and Victoria's bosom heaved with convulsive anguish. "This is too much," cried he, "fly, fly from me my Victoria at once, or I never shall tear myself away.

For an instant he dropped her hands, but ere she could move from him he caught her frantically to his heart, exclaiming “yet one *last* farewell!” for a moment he held her firmly in his embrace, when she gently endeavoured to disengage herself as she murmured, “God for ever bless you, Aretas.” But still he pressed her to his bosom with the fervour of agony, when an electric start and sudden convulsion, seemed to thrill his whole frame; his encircling arms no longer retained her with the vigour of strength, while his declining head sunk heavy on her shoulder, at the moment that the fleeting figure of a monk darted thro’ the columns and fled towards the shore.

With a deep groan that paralyzed the

horor striken Victoria, the hapless victim of revenge, the youthful, beloved, ill-fated Aretas sunk on the marble pavement now died with a crimson current, that issued from a wound inflicted in his back by the fatal poignard of the assassin. At this appalling sight Victoria uttered a shriek that almost might have waked the dead, and sunk on her knees beside the adored form, lovely O ! *how* lovely ! even in death! With frantic violence she tore her drapery and applied it to the part from whence the blood appeared to flow, tho' her hands shook so as to be scarcely capable of performing their office, and a deadly sickness oppressed her heart.

"O blessed death," murmured on the lips of the writhing sufferer, "cease angel

thy fruitless task, and let me breathe my soul out in thy arms; forbid to live in them, how blessed *thus* to die."

A seraphic smile beamed on his partially convulsed and livid countenance, as he twined his arms around her, and she gently raised his head to her shoulder, and supported his reclining form, while still she strove to staunch the wound. "O save him! save him! Father of mercy!—wilt thou not save him!" burst from her repeatedly, as with frenzied looks she gazed upon his changing countenance, each moment more strongly threatening the approach of death. Again he attempted to speak, and half whispered, at intervals he uttered" my Victoria! in this last moment of expiring nature I may dare

tell thee how I love, how I adore and doat on thee ! Precious angel ! weep not : my early fate has spared me a life of misery. Beloved ! pray for me ! Pray that I may be received to mercy, but not that I may survive. I pardon him who gave the fatal blow, I thank him, for it was mercy—what sudden darkness spreads around—my Victoria ! are you near ?—O that was a dreadful pang—but not so bad as losing thee—hold, hold me fast my love—do not quit me.”—He grasped her, but it was a feeble grasp—“ O what immeasurable gloom spreads all around—where am I ? my Victoria—speak to me.—”

“ O ! I am here, and press thee close, close, to my bosom,” the tortured Victoria with difficulty articulated.

"Hold, hold me still—fast fast, I cannot bear to leave thee—but for *that!* death would be nothing—and yet, 'tis awful—what gloomy regions are those? where is Victoria?" he cried, in accents of terror, momentarily raising himself, and staring wildly around—"Ah! sweetest love! still am I with thee"—he added recollecting himself, as an ineffable smile for a moment superseded the contortions of pain, and he sunk again on her bosom with a deep sigh. His arms fell inanimate from around her slender form, which could no longer sustain the dead weight that pressed on it. "Aretas!" she screamed, with the wild piercing shriek of insanity; yet he replied not, he heard not! That voice which once had power to thrill his every nerve, subdue his rea-

son, and enchant his soul, was now unheeded, unreplied to, alas! unheard.—

One lengthened, bursting sigh, alone spoke Victoria's feelings, as she fell senseless across the lifeless body!

CHAPTER XV.

SEVERAL of the domestics at Sanseverino were assembled in the common hall, the door of which was standing open, when a female, bearing every appearance of a maniac, rushed in, crying out to them in Italian to fly to the ruined gate-way where a young Englishman lay bleeding to death beneath the dagger of an assassin. Most of the men were natives of Sicily, and lord Shurgrove's man (Harding) un-

derstood sufficient of the language to be aware of the purport of these words ; he instantly started up and followed the half frantic conductor, attended by all the males. They speedily reached the scene of horror, which for a few moments almost deprived them of the power of exertion.

Beside the youthful hapless victim knelt a figure, whose ghastly and distorted countenance, bristling hair and quaking frame, might well authorize the idea that he was the perpetrator of the horrid deed.

"Seize that man," cried the English servant, to whom the thoughts of laws and justice, instantly occurred, "he must

be kept in custody: and don't let that woman escape; they must both give an account of themselves." He said this as he was raising the lifeless body of his young mistress: what was his horror on discovering whom it was?

One of the men had already been dispatched to summon medical aid. "Good Lord! who would have thought it! but perhaps she has only fainted" cried Harding, regarding in deep affliction the pallid countenance of his lovely lady, "but who can that poor dead gentleman be?" He shivered, as it struck him, it might be Mr. Mansfield. The Italian woman was all this time uttering the most frantic exclamations of despair, tho' exerting herself to lend all the assistance in

her power. The servant who had seized the wretched object before described, attempted to make him rise from his knees ; which he resisted, his projecting orbs never turned from the bleeding body, nor would he reply to any thing that was said to him; neither, indeed did he appear to comprehend, or even utter a sound till they began to raise the body, when a cry almost amounting to a yell escaped him. He started up, and with unnatural strength seized the lifeless form, and bore it along for several paces, when he began to totter, and permitted some one to assist him, as loud sobs burst from his bosom, and large drops fell rapidly from his eyes ; when the wildness of his features disappeared, tho' horror still marked them. But the energies of his mind were re-

turned, and as he hastened onward with his burden he called to those around him, to fly for every doctor in Palermo. And now his lamentations, while he called down curses on his head for having been absent in this moment of danger, discovered him to be Lewis, whose distorted countenance could not be recognized.

Harding having tenderly committed his charge to another, flew forward to anticipate the shock lord Shurgrove must receive, for which he found him in a measure prepared, as the female servants had circulated the report of the murder, which they had been apprised of (in what they thought) so extraordinary a manner, and it had already reached his lordship's ears. On returning to the sitting room, he had

inquired for his daughter, but had gained no intelligence of her, and had then been informed of what had occurred so near his residence.

Harding found his lordship in a state of extreme anxiety and perturbation, awaiting the return of the persons he had sent to seek his daughter. Harding informed him that Miss Clarendon was safe, but he fancied she must have been present at a frightful accident, and that she had fainted, but no doubt would soon recover. That a person had been assassinated, whose body they were now conveying to the house. He forbore to say who it was, aware that it would infinitely increase his lordship's disorder, which was already very great, and continued to

augment every moment, while the still senseless Victoria was carried to her chamber, and he awaited in agony the intelligence of her return to life, which her female attendant and the housekeeper, (who was acquainted with every nostrum essential on such occasions) were endeavouring to accomplish.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE Italian lady was as inseparable from the lifeless body of the loved, unfortunate Aretas, as was his faithful domestic, who was aroused to the utmost exertion by the latent, slender hope, that his lamented master might not have actually expired. He was supplied with every thing he required, and he carefully bound up the dreadful wound, groaning forth his bitter lamentations as he hung

over the bed, applying such restoratives as were likely to recall suspended life, assisted by her whom he now recognized as the female who had first warned him of his master's danger. But these applications produced no visible effect, and Lewis sunk on his knees by the bed side, and chafed the dear inanimate hand, and pressed his lips to the clay cold forehead, while his despair grew deeper and louder as hope entirely expired.

"O Lord ! O Lord !" he cried, "have mercy upon me, a wretched sinner, and kill me at once ! but, Oh ! spare my own dear beautiful boy ! my dear, dear, young master Aretas. Oh ! where are now his rosy cheeks ; how *ghostly* and dead they look ! Oh ! mercy, mercy ! and his sweet

bright eyes are shut, they never shall look on me again, or dart so fiery and so beautiful as they used when he was angry, or look so soft and so melting as when he called me his good, kind Lewis. O Lord ! O Lord ! I never shall hear him again : these dear shiny curls are all that is left like himself. Oh ! the dead cold clam that hangs on his forehead ! My child ! My child ! My dear, dear master Aretas, awake, awake, for God ! for mercy's sake!"

This violence suddenly subsided, and perfect despair seemed to take possession of Lewis, as he wrung his hands together, and moaned inwardly ; then uttered in an under and inarticulate tone, " No, he won't speak to me—he will never speak

to me again—they will soon take him away from me, and that beautiful body shall ——” A shuddering seized him, again he bent forward to kiss the pallid lips, when the eyes slowly opened, and Lewis fell back as if he had been shot through the heart. A violent hysteric succeeded and bursts of laughter and of tears alternately agitated him, while the surgeon (who now arrived) was engaged over the reviving sufferer.

The tender Italian could scarcely support her trembling frame, while she listened in breathless anxiety to hear the fiat pronounced: at length the surgeon said, “ I believe I may venture to assert, the wound is not mortal; had it been the

smallest degree deeper it must have been instant death."

"I have saved him!" ejaculated the mysterious female, in a voice of exultation, as she flew out of the apartment.

CHAPTER XVII.

LEWIS'S boisterous feelings were now tempered by tears of joy, and he was again the most active among the attendants, nor indeed would he permit any of them to approach within some paces of the bed, while he drove one, and pushed another, yet would do every thing himself. The danger he believed threatened his master, had been uppermost in his thoughts since the evening he had

been warned of it by the mourning figure: but all this day he had been engaged in attending to the embarkation of the baggage, &c. His master had said he did not intend going out, so that he felt satisfied of his safety, but towards evening he became apprehensive that he might meditate a farewell visit at Sanseverino, and he returned repeatedly to the lodgings (leaving the business he was occupied about) in order to ascertain if his master still remained at home. Each time he found that he continued secluded in his apartment, into which he dared not obtrude himself, as he had been forbidden to appear, unless summoned.

As it was growing late, Lewis was obliged to hasten the final arrangements

for their departure, and was detained some time, when, on returning, he found his master had gone out. He instantly set off for Sanseverino, and his terrors and apprehensions wrought up his imagination to a state the least favourable to support him under the appalling sight he was destined to behold, and for which he was prepared, by observing a stream of blood trickling down the white marble steps conducting to the colonade that supported the archway, with curdling veins; Lewis rushed forward and sunk on his knees beside the prostrate forms, and remained immovably fixed in horror till discovered as we have before described.

The great effusion of blood, though in

some measure impeded by the means Victoria had adopted to suppress it, had gradually produced that deadly faintness and confusion of ideas, with every other symptom of the approach of death, which Aretas believed he felt in every vein. And when at length restored to life, his extreme weakness and exhaustion rendered him incapable of the slightest exertion, and almost of articulation, and for some time his imagination continued extremely confused, while he scarcely knew where he was, or what had happened.

A similar delusion had clouded Victoria's faculties, but it sooner dispersed, neither did she remain for so long a period wholly insensible. But dreadful

was the moment of returning consciousness, or rather that in which she accurately recalled the recent scene. She started from the bed, stared wildly around her; then fixing her eyes in dull despair, she again sunk on the side of the couch and pressed her hands upon her heart, as in low and solemn accents she murmured, "He is dead—they have murdered him—I saw his blood." Her voice rose, and a frantic air marked her look and gestures, as she continued, "I felt the last pulse of his heart beat against mine—and still do I survive—Oh ! God of Heaven ! have I outlived such horror !" She started up and flew towards the door; when her female attendant, who alone remained with her (the house-keeper having hastened to inform lord

Shurgrove of his daughter's revival) endeavoured to arrest her progress, as she said, in soothing accents, " My dear, dear, lady, where would you go ? "

" Don't stop me, Ellen ; let me pass ! where have they laid his bleeding body—tell me this instant ? "

" O dear, ma'am, you frighten me to death," cried the trembling Ellen, whose copious tears fell on the clenched hand of her mistress, by which she endeavoured to retain her, as she fell on her knees, exclaiming, " Only think of my lord, my poor dear lord, your father ma'am ; you would terrify him to death if he was to see you in this dreadful way.

Recollect yourself my dear lady ; never did I see you look so terrible before."

Victoria became suddenly passive, and permitted herself to be led back ; when, kneeling down and entirely concealing her face, she ejaculated, " Pardon, O heavenly father ! my impious despair, and strengthen me to sustain the agony thou seest fit to inflict on me."

She retained this attitude for some minutes, silently pursuing her devotions, which were interrupted by a hasty tap at the door, and the housekeeper re-entered. The expression of her countenance spoke her the messenger of glad tidings, and she began gradually to prepare Victoria for the encouragement of

more sanguine hope, by informing her the surgeon entertained an idea that Mr. Mansfield was not quite dead : but, scarcely had she spoken, when the door flew open, and the Italian lady burst into the room, and throwing herself at Victoria's feet, she exclaimed, " O ! bless me ! bless me ! I have saved him ! he lives, he lives, and I have saved him !"

Some time elapsed ere Victoria could in any measure recover the violent effects of this delightful intelligence, or utter any thing but imperfect exclamations of gratitude to heaven, and still longer was it before her composure returned sufficiently to enable her to think collectedly, or pay any attention to the persons around her. But at length her mind

resumed its natural energies, and was no longer insensible to the necessity of exertion, and she endeavoured to quell the perturbation that still shook her frame. She inquired for her father, and had the satisfaction of hearing that he had been prevailed on to retire to rest, after having been assured that she was much better, that he was still ignorant of who was the person that had been assassinated, but had desired that every possible attention should be paid him.

Victoria now dismissed her female attendants, with orders that they should devote themselves to the service of the invalid, and bring her intelligence of the slightest change that might take place. Her thoughts now turned on the

mysterious female. Victoria scarcely knew how to regard her. She certainly appeared in a suspicious light, yet she asserted that she had saved Aretas ; but, how could that be ? Victoria had not before beheld her ; her figure was highly interesting, and what rendered it peculiarly so, was the affliction she evidently endured ; for her tears never ceased to flow, while she seemed labouring to unburthen herself of some mighty secret. When she had first entered, Victoria had no sooner understood the full purport of her words, than she had fallen on her neck in an extacy of joy and gratitude, but as reflection returned, her confidence in the stranger decreased, and she was no sooner left alone with her, than she entreated her to explain, as far

as was in her power, the particulars connected with the dreadful deed (which she appeared to be acquainted with) and in what manner her interference could have prevented the consequences proving fatal.

" You see before you," cried the unhappy woman, with all the energy and gesticulation of her nation, " a wretched being laden with misery, disgrace and sin, and who would not have presumed to enter your presence, but to denounce the author of her crimes, but more—of that foul deed she this night witnessed!"

" Witnessed!"

"Even so. To your faith and confidence I must submit my short, but wretched history, to make intelligible the only circumstance I can reveal with pleasure. You will not betray me, but if you should, it matters not.—Angelica was born to suffer."

Victoria addressed her in soothing language, assured her she might place implicit reliance on her faith, and having again obtained an accurate account of the exact state of the interesting sufferer, she requested Angelica to proceed with the relation of her woes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE shall dwell more at large on the subject of Angelica's history (and those circumstances connected with it) than she did herself, or felt it necessary to do, in her recital to Victoria.

Angelica di Bodoni, was the only daughter of a Neapolitan nobleman, whose two sons shared his patrimony, while *she* was early destined to embrace a

religious life. Even her childhood was passed within the gloomy walls of a monastery, nor had she a wish beyond them. Ignorant of the very existence of those pleasures to which youth is most susceptible, she repined not at her lot; on the contrary, she gloried in it, and thought the highest distinction she could enjoy in this world, was that of devoting herself wholly to the inactive adoration of her creator, while she felt perfectly confident she was pursuing the surest path to eternal happiness. The calm of innocence tempered every sensation, and she felt that virtue was peace.

She had passed her fifteenth year, when a severe fit of sickness left her so debilitated, as to render it necessary she should subscribe to her physician's opi-

nion, and try the efficacy of sea-bathing, and she was committed to the charge of an aunt who resided in a villa not far from Naples, and adjacent to the sea, from which the convent was distant several leagues. Angelica had already entered the year of her noviciate, when she became a temporary resident at the abode of her aunt, with whom she was to continue as long as was essential to the recovery of her health. Here her brothers were permitted to visit her. Gay, thoughtless, and inconsiderate, their conversation was not always of that description most suitable to vestal's ears: they recounted anecdotes of what was passing in the circles they frequented, descanted on the potent effects of hatred, revenge and love; and awakened ideas in the tranquil mind of their sister

that had never before been aroused ; while she yet comprehended nothing but the names of those passions which lay dormant in her bosom, and scarcely could give credit to the violent operations ascribed to them.

It was at that period, she had first beheld their very emblem, in the person of Allioni di Velino. He was the almost inseparable companion of her brothers ; esteemed the flower of the Neapolitan youth, the leader of fashion, the idol of the softer sex. Weak and ill judging, these young men yielded to his importunities, and introduced him into the presence of their sister, whose personal charms they had eulogized in his hearing. They considered themselves as sufficient

guards for her honour, and aware of the impetuosity of Allioni's feelings, they believed he would not hesitate to offer her his hand, should she inspire him with a lively attachment, when she would be saved from a monastic life, which they began to regret she must otherwise be doomed to. The ravages of uncontroled passions, were not then so evident in the form and features of Allioni, as they afterwards became; his person was striking, which (together with the manner and language he adopted) was sufficient to justify an ardent affection in a youthful and inexperienced bosom; and Angelica loved this demon with all the purity and fervour of an innocent and susceptible heart. A stranger to the arts of mankind, she believed him *all* that he

appeared to be, nor ever suspected him of a dishonourable thought ; guarded and reserved, before her brothers, *they* imagined she had failed to make any impression on him, nor ever dreamt of the stolen interviews di Velino obtained, under pretext of apprehending that they would disapprove of his passion, and once aware of it, separate him for ever from the tender Angelica, who believed her own happiness and that of di Velino, equally involved.

Her health, perfectly re-established, there no longer remained a plea for her absence from the convent, and her aunt became anxious she should return to it. She had harboured views similar to those of her nephews, in regard to Allioni, but

perceiving no probability of their fruition
she was no longer desirous of retaining
Angelica with her.

This was the period big with the fate
of that hapless victim. She had till then,
been uniformly deaf to di Velino's entreaties,
to fly with him to a distant part of
Italy where their hands might be joined,
when he would re-conduct her to her
friends, whom he trusted they should not
find inexorable. But the apprehension
of their displeasure (which di Velino
found it necessary to persuade Angelica,
would attend the knowledge of their at-
tachment,) was slightly regarded by her,
in comparison to the heinous offence
she considered it to relinquish the holy
life, she had once thought embraced all

earthly happiness, and sacrificing her duty to heaven. But even that strong and affecting conviction, as well as every other consideration inimical to the views of di Velino, gave way before the near approach of an everlasting separation, and the night previous to the day appointed for her return to the convent, she fled with Allioni, who conducted her on board a fishing boat which she confidently believed was to re-land her on a distant part of the Italian coast, where her marriage might be solemnized.

But di Velino soon acquainted her with his intentions, as far as related to their destination. He dared not return to Naples, after the perpetration of an offence, which would draw on him the

vengeance of the ecclesiastical power, and where he should be exposed to the fury of the exasperated relations of the unfortunate Angelica. He had resolved to emigrate to Sicily, a step he had long meditated, not from any attachment to the royal party, but the embarrassment of his circumstances, and declining credit, rendered it necessary he should change his place of residence, and he hoped by a display of loyalty to obtain the favour of his sovereign, and perhaps an employment about the court.

On this speculation he repaired to Palermo (where they landed on the fourth day) still deluding the devoted Angelica, who doated on him with all her sex's tenderness, by pretences she too soon found

to be false. By means of his Italian servant (the companion of his flight, named Marteo) he procured apartments for her in the suburbs; the same Aretas afterwards occupied: and Angelica was established at Signora Bogia's, under the name of di Rossi. Di Velino was anxious to keep this connection a profound secret, as should the particulars be discovered, he knew not how far he might be involved, nor was he sure that he should escape the punishment of his offence, even in Sicily; at any rate he was quite certain the contempt and detestation of society would follow the knowledge of his enormities. He always took such precautions as prevented his person being known to Signora Bogia or any of her domestics, he generally returned late at night, and

when first he was there, seldom went out till the dusk of the evening. Bogia was convinced there was something mysterious about him, which also involved the person who called herself his wife, but as she (Bogia) was to receive an immoderate compensation for accommodating them, she did not attempt to gratify her curiosity in regard to their respectability.

Months wore away, and Angelica's misery was confirmed, for di Velino no longer deceived her, either, as to his intentions or character. The latter, became every day more apparent to her, tho' she tried to shut her eyes to it, for still fondly loving him, she could not bear to think him quite a villain.

“ Pain that woman’s heart grows fonder
When her dream of bliss is o’er.”

By degrees, her young mind began to comprehend the nature of guilt, its horrors, and dreadful consequences, and she felther-self a wretch indeed, when reduced to depend entirely on such a being as di Velino for support, shelter and protection, nay even for her very sustenance. Her country and her friends she had for ever forfeited : even to heaven she dared not look for succour, feeling as she did, that she had offended, beyond all hope of forgiveness. And now to “fill the measure of her woes,” each moment witnessed the increasing indifference of the murderer of her peace, and of indifference,

Who can describe the hopeless silent pang
With which the gentle heart first marks
her sway,
Eyes the sure progress of her icy fang
Resistless, slowly fostering on her prey;
Sees rapture's brilliant colours fade away,
And all the glow of beaming sympathy;
Anxious to watch the cold averted ray,
That speaks no more to the fond meeting eye,
Enchanting tales of love, of tenderness
and joy.*

His absences were longer and more frequent, and when di Velino did appear he was lost in gloomy meditations, returned the tender caresses of Angelica with captious ill humour, or taunting coldness;

* Mrs. Tighe's Psyche.

and often when conversing with Marteo, he dropped allusions to things past, and transactions they had been concerned in, that made her tremble and turn pale.

Allioni thought her a gentle, doating creature, who would think and act, nay look, even as he commanded, and dreaded not the inferences she might draw from what fell from him, nor longer troubled himself to wear a mask in her presence. Frequent bursts of passion distorted his form and convulsed his features, while she looked on aghast, questioning if this could be really the soft insinuating di Veleno, who had charmed her to her ruin?

And when, for days together, he had remained away, and she (when he at-

length appeared) with bitterest tears lamented his inconstancy, he scarcely would deny the charge, but would tell her, she was unreasonable to expect his exclusive affection. Yet this treatment failed to excite those venomous passions in the breast of Angelica, which are supposed to characterize the Italian. The retirement she had been educated in had repressed them, and the principles that had been instilled into her mind, now checked them, and turned all her reproaches on herself, from the consciousness that her fatal derelection of religion and virtue, had occasioned her present misery, and reduced her to the most abject of all situations, from which she beheld no possibility of extricating herself.

No attachment can long survive the confirmation of guilt in the object that inspired it! and in proportion as Angelica became more and more convinced of Alioni's utter worthlessness, her affection for him diminished, and perhaps had she had an asylum to fly to, she might have summoned resolution to have quitted him for ever.

But “a stranger in a land unknown,” friendless, and pennyless, whither could she fly? Youth, and inexperience, forbade the possibility of that solid reflection, which would have enabled her to strike out the only right line of conduct, and to abide by it; and she remained a prey to the tortures of conscience, and imperfect repentance.

CHAPTER XIX.

ANGELICA had seen little of Di Veleno, for near a fortnight, when, one night, he came home, (or rather to see her, for he had apartments in the city, which he occupied in his real name, and where he received his visitors) and appeared in a state of more than ordinary irritation ; and while he paced the apartment, with uneven steps, he uttered execrations against the whole English na-

tion ; and Angelica could easily gather that some one of *that* country, had excited his fury. Whoever it might be, she trembled for his safety, for the dark horror that sat on the brow of di Velino, spoke the strongest language of revenge.

She dared not, at this time inform him that Bogia had, on that very day caused her to retire from her apartments in order that they might be shewn to an English gentleman, to whom (she had afterwards informed her) she had let them, and that she (Angelica) must on the next morning give them up, as the arrears of payment were so considerable : but that she might have inferior ones, in another part of the house. Angelica doubted not that this would enrage di

Velino to a pitch of madness, and could not venture to breathe a syllable of it ; at that moment—“ Arrogant, presumptuous boy !” burst from the quivering lips of Allioni. “ Audacious Mansfield ! You shall rue this insolence, this cool contempt, detested Englishman !” with many other expressions of hatred and revenge, which Angelica narrowly marked, while he, mad with rage (which he had been compelled so long to suppress) raved on, scarcely sensible of her presence ; nor suspecting that she, who was accustomed to witness the fits of passion he frequently indulged without assigning any cause for them, would note his present conduct as any thing unusual.

At that period Allioni’s whole soul was

occupied with the idea of Victoria, and it was on that night he had invited Aretas, at Lord R—s, to accompany him the ensuing day to Sanseverino, when Mansfield had, with so little ceremony, declined the proposal. This, confirmed the dislike di Velino had already conceived of him, and increased his suspicions of his being a favourite of Victoria's, and when he the next morning met at Sanseverino, he no longer doubted it. Yet Victoria's unusual complacency towards himself, for a moment staggered his opinion, and his vanity led him to believe, she had planned the opportunity for his declaring himself, which he had so eagerly availed himself of. But the disgust and abhorrence she had displayed on the occasion, and the manner in

which she had addressed Aretas on his suddenly re-entering, banished every flattering suggestion. Yet, he observed that Aretas did not assume the tone of an accepted lover, but on the contrary would have retired, had Victoria permitted him ; though when he *did* advance into the apartment, he appeared offended and much disturbed, and obstinately persisted in remaining behind, though he (the count) openly requested he would accompany him.

There was a mystery in all this ; and exasperated to the last degree by the contumelious manner in which he had on that day been dismissed, the desire of revenge strengthened in Allioni's breast ; and he meditated the best mode of ob-

taining it; resolving, in the dusk of evening to repair to Signora Bogia's, and there with Marteo consult upon this dreadful subject.

Meantime the hapless Angelica had been compelled by Bogia to relinquish her elegant apartments, and retire to those appointed for her: while she entertained the strongest apprehensions of di Velino's fury, when he should again repair there, and feared it would all fall upon her, for not having informed him of what Bogia proposed. But the circumstance of their having received this treatment, to afford accommodation to an *Englishman*, she believed would irritate him to the last degree. The idea suddenly struck her that it might be the

very same person for whom he had expressed such abhorrence, and this suggestion completed her dismay. She watched at her window for the arrival of the stranger, fancying she could almost determine whether her fears were just by the appearance of his person. Lord R——'s carriage conducted Aretas to his new abode.

Angelica observed him descend from it, and he stood for some time parleying with the servant, so that she had a perfect view of him, and with foreboding horror admitted the conviction, that he was exactly the being calculated to excite di Velino's envy and detestation. It was on the same occasion that she had also observed the person of Lewis sufficiently

to recognise it at a future period. She was still sitting at her window, when Aretas set out on his walk to Sanseverino, and as she marked his graceful figure and majestic port, she felt all her suspicions confirmed. She resolved to endeavour to learn his name, in the lingering hope that she might be deceived, and when Marteo served her scanty meal, she asked him if he knew the title of the *Signor Inglese*? for she had no idea that a person of distinction could possibly be without a *title*.

Marteo replied that he supposed he must be a *mi-lord*, that his name was Mansfield. Angelica started, for though unable to recal it before, she no sooner heard it again, than she knew it to be the

same di Velino had pronounced with so much venom.

Marteo continued, as he was engaged in clearing the table, “ The count Allioni knows him well, he has good cause to know him ; this is not the first time he has dared to be troublesome. He is now at Sanseverino, but before he comes back the count shall know how we have been treated on that Englishman’s account, he won’t be long in our way, or I am very much mistaken.” This was rather muttered than spoken out, but he continued ; (exchanging his gloomy aspect for one of indifference,) “ the count (he felt himself too much his equal ever to call him master) the count will compel Sig-

nora Bogia to turn this foreigner out of her house."

Angelica deeply pondered the words of the domestic; they filled her with horror, though the suspicions they excited would never have been aroused, had she not repeatedly been present at conversations between di Velino and his confidant, by which she had been led to infer they scarcely esteemed it a crime to rid themselves of those they termed their enemies. Marteo was absent during the remainder of the day, and she began to dread they were actually plotting the destruction of, perhaps, an innocent man, and the thought struck her, that if she could by any means assist in saving him, that one act, would in some measure

atone for her crimes and spare di Velino so dreadful an accumulation of sin. But how was this to be accomplished, while uncertain too of their intentions?

In the solitude of her chamber, encouraging the dreadful train of thought that presented itself, her horrible suspicion each moment gained ground. Marteo returned not, and she almost persuaded herself he was employed in the execution of a plan to attack the young Englishman on his return from Sanseverino. To that beautiful place she was no stranger, the only walk she ever took was along the shore, and sometimes in the dusk of the evening she had reached even the borders of the domain.

Scarcely aware of what was her purpose, and prompted by the apprehensions that assailed her, she hastened out, and under shade of the rocks pursued her way for a short distance along the shore, when she perceived Aretas, (who, by his walk and figure she instantly recognised) advancing. When actuated by the impulse of the moment, she approached him with the intention of warning him that some danger hung over him, in order to put him on his guard, though she dared not reveal from what quarter it was to be apprehended. That her humane intention was frustrated, is already known. Not certain that (if, indeed, he were not more mischievously employed) Allioni himself might not be among the party she heard advancing, she retired with

precipitation, and not long after she had reached her home, had the satisfaction of ascertaining that Mansfield had followed her in safety. She had no expectation of seeing di Velino on that night, as he had been there so recently ; she was therefore no less surprised than distressed when Marteo at length returned and informed her he had seen the count, who would be there almost immediately. She inquired if he knew of her removal ? " Yes," returned Marteo, " and I fancy he will set all to rights speedily."

Angelica instantly conjectured that di Velino was coming in all the violence of his fury, to wreak his vengeance openly on the object who had excited it, and terrified almost out of her senses, she flew

down to Signora Bogia, and told her she expected her husband, who she doubted not would be extremely angry, and entreated she would endeavour to pacify him, and tell him the English gentleman was not come home, as she feared his resentment would involve him in an unpleasant affray. Bogia paid no regard whatever to her distress, but became extremely abusive, when her elevated voice had reached the ears of Aretas. But the entrance of di Velino had given a new aspect to the scene. He demanded the cause of Angelica's perturbation, which she confessed arose from her apprehensions of his displeasure, but to her utter amazement, he declared himself perfectly satisfied with the new arrangement, adding, that Marteo had already informed

him of it. But Bogia followed them to the very door of their chamber, sounding the praises of the *Signore Forestière*, (which expression Aretas had overheard, as she went past his door) and boasting of the liberal payment she was to receive from him; thus endeavouring to offer some excuse for her conduct.

Di Velino bade Angelica retire to rest, as he had some accounts to settle with Marteo. She obeyed in silence, drawing the most unfavourable omen from his unusual composure under such circumstances. Her chamber being within the apartment where she left Allioni and his coadjutor, she endeavoured to catch the sound of their voices, but they conversed in so low and cautious a tone, that a word

now and then alone reached her ear, but that was sufficient to convince her they were debating on the subject she had suspected engrossed their minds, and that the destruction of the young Englishman was their horrid theme; but how, or when it was to be accomplished, she could not gather, nor indeed was it determined at that interview, but merely consulted upon.

CHAPTER XX.

FEW things could have been more satisfactory to di Velino, than the chance which placed Aretas under the same roof with him, as it enabled him to be a complete spy on his motions, and though he resolved he should not survive the insults he had heaped on him, he determined to act cautiously and as occasion best suited. In the meantime, to ascertain his exact situation in regard to Victoria was his

aim, and with this view he projected the visit to Aretas, which he made the ensuing day, having left the house early in the morning, in the dress, or rather disguise, he always wore on repairing there; but when he returned to wait on Aretas, he came in his carriage, nor was it suspected (by those ignorant of the fact) that the count di Velino was the person who appeared as the mysterious di Rossi.

He obtained all the knowledge he could desire from this visit to Aretas, by whose behaviour he was perfectly convinced of the fervency of his attachment to Victoria, which nevertheless, it was obvious he dare not own nor avow himself her lover.

Di Velino could not fathom this mystery, but he believed that Aretas's relinquishment of Victoria (which he resolved to acquaint her with) would prove a formidable auxiliary in her favour. But revenge demanded the life of him, who had so repeatedly insulted him, and the haughty, and even contemptuous reception he met from Aretas, confirmed his fatal resolution. Yet anxious to escape, even the imputation of so foul a crime, and the consequences which might follow, he determined to feign an intention of going to a distant part of Sicily, and by its being imagined he was absent, he hoped to evade suspicions, which he was aware would be excited, as it was well known he was a candidate for Vic-

toria's favour, and generally concluded that young Mansfield was his rival.

Allioni had formed an intimacy with one of the monks belonging to the fraternity that occupied the monastery adjacent to Sanseverino, and through his application to the abbot, di Velino had obtained that residence for lord Shurgrove. Through this monk, also, he procured a fellow key to that which secured the doors at each termination of the passage that conducted to the grotto of St. Rosolia ; thus he could, at any time, gain private access to the grounds. His friendship with the friar had originated in circumstances not exactly creditable to the profession of the latter, who felt himself

bound to oblige Allioni, in order to secure his silence.

Shortly after his interview with Aretas, he found an opportunity of returning unperceived to the house, where he remained the whole day, keeping watch on his movements, and by his presence prevented every scheme Angelica might have attempted to warn Aretas of his danger. Finding that he did not move out all day, di Velino concluded he was too much disturbed to venture to Sanseverino. To repair there openly, himself, he knew would not be the means of obtaining an interview with Victoria, for he was certain she would not receive him : therefore his only chance of seeing her, was to steal upon her privacy, and hoping to surprise

her in her evening walk, he hastened to Sanseverino, thro' the passage leading to the grotto, and had unlocked the door, to pass thro', when he heard some one enter the cave, and it was he who pushed the door close when Victoria had attempted to open it. Thro' the crevices he perceived that it was Victoria, but forebore to present himself before her at that moment, as on no account did he wish to betray that he could command this entrance to the domain, as it would of course have put her on her guard for the future. She was some paces from the grotto, ere he ventured to quit it, when he ran forward by a parallel path, from whence he turned into that she was traversing, and met her as if coming from an opposite direction. The result of this

interview confirmed the influence of all his evil passions, and left him resolved to accomplish their gratification the moment it was practicable.

During his absence, Lewis had seized the opportunity (he had been watching for all day) to convey the blank cover and its contents which his master had delivered to him, into the apartment of Angelica, where she discovered it, and immediately entertained a just suspicion of the quarter from whence it came. For who, but an inhabitant of the same house could have adopted such a method of supplying her necessities? which she concluded had reached the knowledge of the young Englishman thro' his servant, who had probably gained an insight into her

situation from the observations he had made. She was yet too innocent in thought, to draw any inference injurious to the liberal stranger, from the donation she doubted not was the offering of benevolence, and instigated by all those gentle sympathizing sensations she had read in his countenance.

Here she beheld the means of flying from di Velino, whose very idea now filled her with disgust, and who she could not look on without horror, since convinced of the project that occupied his wretched mind. But should she leave him without making any effectual effort to warn her generous benefactor of the danger that threatened him? every feeling of her heart forbade it; but they were equally re-

fractory to any suggestion which would have led her to denounce or implicate di Velino. No, *that* she felt impossible, and thought, could she be capable of it, it would add to, rather than diminish the catalogue of her offences. But to save the young Englishman, spare di Velino this horrible addition to his crimes, and leave him for ever, was all that she wished to accomplish. He had told her he should return shortly, she dared not venture out, tho' she observed Aretas walking on the sands for a short time: but she knew not that Allioni might not at that moment be near, and should he observe her parleying with, or seeking to throw herself in the way of him he termed his enemy, his suspicions would instantly be aroused, and her charitable intentions

for ever frustrated. She was still pondering how to accomplish her design, when di Velino returned more gloomy than ever.

The night was again passed in consultation with Marteo, while Angelica vainly distracted herself with the endeavour to strike out an expedient to further her intention. She thought of writing, but had neither materials, or light, and the whole of the ensuing day di Velino continued with her, for as it was then supposed he had quitted Palermo, he dared not appear abroad, and was besides keeping strict watch over Aretas, who in the evening quitted the house, and proceeded towards Sanseverino. Angelica observed him, as well as di Velino, who started up

and summoned Marteo. When he appeared, Allioni seized his arm in extraordinary agitation, and pointed the way Aretas had taken, and as he pronounced “Sanseverino,” he turned pale as death, and trembled: but a ferocious wildness fired his eyes, as he added, “Now, now.”

Marteo, with a savage grin, asked him why he shook? when they both hastened from the room, and Angelica saw them quit the house together. That their purpose was of the most direful nature, she could not for a moment question. They did not proceed along the sands, but she doubted not they would pursue some private way to the spot they wished to reach. She remained long undecided how to act, when her eye caught the person of Lewis

and the idea struck her, to warn him of his master's danger, when she hastened after him and alarmed him in the manner before depicted.

She felt in some degree relieved when convinced she had made him understand her, and that he would hasten to his master, (whom it was evident he knew to be at Sanseverino) and in all probability arrive before he had set out on his return, and prevent his braving the threatening danger, and also apprise him that he had enemies who sought his life. Satisfied that she had prevented evil for the present, she returned in comparative peace to her chamber. Lewis, she knew, must be a stranger to her person, as he had never seen her, tho' she had often caught sight

of him thro' her window shades, nor did she suppose he would recognize her features, even should he see her again.

It was after midnight, when the Count and his domestic returned; disappointment marked their gloomy countenances, and Angelica felt assured that all was as she could wish. The next day the *Sirocco* completely enervated both mind and body. Angelica was incapable of reflection: Mansfield returned not to his apartments. But the ensuing morning all her terrors were renewed on learning (which she did thro' Marteo's communications to his master) that Aretas was again under the same roof with them. Marteo also delivered some letters to di Velino, which appeared to excite some agitation in his

feelings, and after having repeatedly perused them, he sat down to write, and continued engaged with his pen for a considerable time, but was at length interrupted by the precipitate re-entrance of Marteo. Angelica was in her chamber, but the door was a-jar, and she heard every word Marteo said. He entered exclaiming, "He is to sail for England to-morrow." "Who?" cried di Velino. "Mansfield your detested enemy!" "Never!" exclaimed Allioni starting up, as he added "we must be speedy and resolute, but how have you learnt this?"

Marteo here repeated the conversation that had taken place between Captain Allenby and his nephew, which he had overheard, by applying his ear to the key

hole of Aretas's apartment; this he was in the habit of doing whenever he thought it likely any particular conversation was going forward. He had a competent knowledge of the English language, his master also spoke it tolerably. Di Velino hastily concluded what he was writing, and having completely disguised himself, went out with Marteo. What a day did Angelica pass? all she could do was to watch incessantly, the moment when Aretas (who she trusted was in a measure aware of his danger, thro' her intimation to his servant) should leave the house, when she resolved at all events instantly to follow him and apprise him of the fate that hung over him. The evening was far advanced, when she at length perceived him, pursuing the accustomed way.

She flew down the stairs, but was impeded in her progress by Signoria Bogia, who addressing her, saying, "Here is a man with a letter for you, and he won't give it to any body else, I dare say it is about no good."

Angelica took the letter from the man, who immediately retired. She stopped not to peruse or even open it, but putting it in her pocket, hastened to pursue Aretas. He was already at a distance, and advanced at so rapid a pace as rendered it impossible for Angelica to overtake him, or even get within hearing. Still she followed, even to the ruined gate-way, and there beheld his meeting with Victoria, while she herself remained concealed behind a column. She observed them ad-

vance, and tho' she could not comprehend their language, the tone it was spoken in convinced her of its purport. On beholding Victoria she was no longer at a loss to understand the cause of di Velino's hatred of the young Englishman, who she was now convinced was a favoured lover. The tears of sympathy streamed from her eyes, when she beheld them clasped in each other's arms, in all the agony of separation. At that moment a passing shadow attracted her eye which fell on the figure of a monk, emerging from the adjacent shade; he darted forward, and ere she suspected his intention (never dreaming that villainy could dwell in such a guise) he had raised the poignard to plunge into his victim, but it fell short of its aim, for, with the strength

of desperation, Angelica seized the assassin's arm and robbed it of half its force.

Di Velino (for it was he) stopped not to ascertain, *who* had endeavoured to impede the blow, which he felt confident had, nevertheless been effectual; but fled along the shore, to where a boat was in readiness to convey him from the island. He was joined by Marteo, who lay in ambush among the rocks. He had been deputed by his master to perpetrate the horrid act, while the latter awaited in the boat; for Allioni had never before been *principal* on a like occasion, whatever he might have instigated; nor was it his intention to be himself the executioner. But suspicious, even of the partner of his crimes, he told him he would be near to

aid him, should it be requisite, and attired in the habit of a monk he lingered in the cave of St. Rosolia, from whence, having a view of the entrance thro' the arch, he could perceive when Aretas repassed it, and he resolved to keep near, and should Marteo falter in his purpose, assist his indecision.

On observing Victoria with his rival, his anxiety to learn the purport of their conversation, induced him to steal from his retreat, and advance cautiously thro' the shade, till he was within a few paces of them; when his rage and jealousy were augmented to the highest pitch, at sight of Victoria clasped to the breast of the object of his detestation; and to annihilate him at that moment, seemed the per-

fection of revenge ; and di Velino believed he had obtained it, when rushing past the spot where Marteo lay concealed, he exclaimed, “ ’Tis done.” and they fled together.

CHAPTER XXI.

ANGELICA opened her whole heart to her sympathizing auditor, who beheld in her, the innocent sacrifice of lawless passion, and premeditated villainy ; and she trembled to think what further outrage the monster Allioni might be plotting. Whether he, or an emissary of his, had inflicted the wound, she was ignorant, for Angelica declared, she could not speak positively as to the person of

the assassin, it being so much disguised ; but she, in her heart believed it to be Allioni, for she knew his air and action, but would not say so. In the relation of her own wrongs, she had been hurried into a confession of all she was aware of concerning di Velino's guilt, while she repeatedly implored Victoria not to betray her confidence, and threw herself wholly on her compassion, adding, at the conclusion of her recital, that her only remaining wish, was to end her days in religious seclusion, and to devote the remnant of her life to expiating her offences.

Victoria had been informed that persons had been dispatched, in every direction in the hope of securing the as-

sassin, but she could not flatter herself they would prove successful, as she doubted not he had taken effectual steps for escaping the most vigilant search. That he had been attired in a monk's habit, and had come from the direction of the passage that communicated with the monastery (and she now remembered the shadow that had alarmed her, and in which she had imagined herself deceived) would reflect a stain on the holy fraternity, which she trusted it would arouse to trace the horrid deed to its foundation.

That di Velino intended at a future period to re-appear at Palermo, confident that as this affair had happened during

his absence he should escape all implication, Victoria felt assured, but hoped that the evidences of his guilt would be too strong to permit of it.

Angelica now recollects the letter she had received, as she was in the act of quitting the house of Signora Bogia; and she searched for it, but it was not in her pocket, and she was much distressed when she became convinced that she must have dropped it. She had some hopes it might have fallen to the ground when she imagined she was conveying it to her pocket, in which case she might still recover it, and Victoria assured her she would send early in the morning to inquire for it. In the mean time she advised her to endeavour to obtain some re-

pose, while she repeatedly declared to her that she had secured a friend by a tie which could never be broken. Tears of gratitude shone in the eyes of Victoria, and her heart warmed with affection towards the unfortunate Angelica, as she regarded her as the preserver of its dearest treasure : an oppressive sensation affected her, nor could she find words to express the feelings excited by this interesting creature, who, with such humanity and perseverance, had watched over her beloved, and whose resolution, and intrepidity, had been the means of saving him. Again, and again she endeavoured to convince her of the sentiment her conduct had excited, and Angelica could well define the excess of her emotions,

assured, as she was, that the young Englishman possessed Victoria's tenderest affections.

She consented to retire to an apartment that was prepared for her, and being secure of the protection of one of her own sex, she felt in a state of comparative comfort; it might almost be said happiness, for the gloomy wretchedness that had involved her fate, from the moment she had strayed from the path of virtue, was at this period nearly eclipsed by the splendor of that act by which she found herself the instrument of preserving the life of a fellow-creature, and not simply *that*, but a most valuable life, nay which was esteemed, at least by one person *invaluable*. In her present situa-

tion Angelica felt that she was regaining the road she had wandered from ; repentance and religion were in perspective, and peace, as a brilliant glory spread around them.

CHAPTER XXII.

VICTORIA rejoiced to be left alone ; it required the calming influence of solitude and silence, to tranquillize the perturbation of her mind. She wanted to pour forth unwitnessed her gratitude to heaven ; she wished to banish the tumult of her thoughts, it was painful to her to turn her ideas for a moment from her Aretas and what concerned his safety, and she spent the hours in prayers for

his recovery, and thanksgivings for his preservation.

Lewis passed the night by his master's bed side, and watched his every breath, while he scarcely turned his eyes from his face. Aretas appeared to doze, and had not yet spoken, though during the time the surgeon had been with him he had seemed perfectly sensible of what was going forward, but too weak to articulate. Towards morning he opened his eyes, and the first words he uttered were, "Does she know that I live?"

"What, the lady in black, Sir? O, yes," said Lewis. Aretas closed his

eyes, and whispered, "Miss Clarendon!"

"Miss Hamilton?" repeated Lewis, who could not hear distinctly, and who thought she must of course be uppermost in his master's ideas, which he believed were wandering—"Lord, Sir, don't talk so, I hope you will be quite well before ever she hears of this sad affair; I am sure it would be the death of her if she could see you now."

Aretas groaned and clenched his hand in a few moments, elevating his tone, with difficulty he repeated, "Miss Clarendon, Victoria; tell her I survive."

" Oh ! Miss Clarendon, she knows, she knows it, Sir, her maid has been at the door twenty times to inquire for you."

" Bless her ;" murmured Aretas, and relapsed into a state of torpor, while Lewis pursued an idea that had some time before presented itself in the form of a strong suspicion that his young master was not a perfect pattern of constancy. That Miss Clarendon should be very much in love with him was very natural, and almost a thing of course in Lewis's opinion, and he felt perfectly confident of it, when he recollect ed the state of insensibility, in which she had

been found on the bleeding body of his master.

Aretas's repeated visits to Sanseverino, the uneasiness he had lately appeared to labour under, and various other trifling circumstances, convinced Lewis, that so lovely a young lady as Miss Clarendon, was not born to sigh in vain; but how this matter could be satisfactorily arranged, it puzzled Lewis to determine. Like most other people he espoused the cause of the party present, and thought how much more suitable this grand lady, the daughter of a lord, was for the wife of his beautiful boy, than the pretty Miss Hamilton, whom nobody seemed to think much about, and whose mamma lived in a house no better than a cottage, and

had nothing grand about her. Thus it is with the world in general, and if Lewis's senses were dazzled with the glare of pomp and splendour, it was a weakness which the wisest and most enlightened have sometimes betrayed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

VICTORIA quitted her chamber at an early hour: the accounts she received of Aretas were satisfactory, and she waited impatiently to acquaint her father with the particulars of this melancholy event. On repairing to Angelica's chamber, she found her in a sweet sleep, and she gently retired without disturbing her. She had scarcely entered the breakfast room, when captain Allenby was announced.

He was in much disorder, having learnt only half an hour before what had befallen his nephew. Victoria repeated the report of the surgeon, and succeeded in appeasing, in some measure, his alarm, and prevailed on him not to attempt seeing Aretas till he was more composed. Captain Allenby then proceeded to relate how the intelligence had reached him. "I fully expected," said he, "to have found Aretas on board my ship last night, when I repaired to it, as I had told him I should sail, wind permitting, early this morning, and on returning from hence yesterday, I called a second time at his lodgings, to ask him if we should dine together, and he sent me word, (for I did not see him) that he should be engaged all day, but would sleep on

board. I was therefore much surprised when midnight arrived, and I saw nothing of him, but I concluded he would come on board early in the morning; though I half suspected, as he was so extremely averse to quitting Palermo, that he had resolved to remain behind; yet I thought he would have let me know, besides which, his baggage was all on board. I inquired for him the first thing on waking, but gained no tidings of him, and immediately determined to come on shore. Though it was early when I landed, I yet perceived an unusual bustle in the part of the city through which I passed, and found that it was ringing with the report of an assassination which had taken place at some distance from the town, and on

further inquiry I learnt that it was an Englishman of distinction who had suffered, but it was supposed he was not dead, as a surgeon had been sent for. A dread came upon me, though I had no reason to suppose Aretas had any private enemy, and I scarcely could command my voice sufficiently to ask the name of the unfortunate person, but this my informant was ignorant of, and I lost not a moment in hastening to Aretas's lodgings ; the woman there told me that he had not been at home all night, and she had just heard that a murder had been committed near Sanseverino, and she was pretty certain that he must be the sufferer. You may conceive my feelings, my dear Miss Clarendon."

Victoria could, indeed, well imagine what must have been the sensations of captain Allenby, who continued, " I was flying off, when she stopped me, saying, that a letter had fallen into her hands, which would lead to the discovery of the assassin, and she would deliver it to me for a suitable recompence. I gave her all the money I had about me, and got it into my possession, when she told me it had been dropped by a young woman, who had also disappeared, and as she owed her a sum of money, she had opened the letter in hopes of discovering where she might be found, and that she thought it was from a man, whom she called her husband. But I scarcely stopped to hear what

she said, so eager was I to hasten hither."

Lord Shurgrove now sent to require his daughter's attendance, for on hearing that captain Allenby was with her, he would not appear. He had no sooner received an assurance from Victoria of her amended health, than he expressed his astonishment at captain Allenby's early visit.

"Your surprise, my dear father, will cease when you know the urgent cause that brought him here," said Victoria.

"Why? what is the matter?" cried lord Shurgrove, "I suppose he is going to England and wants his nephew to

accompany him, but I am sure he will not go."

" Alas ! he will not indeed ?"

" Why, do you wish him to go ?"

" Oh ! no, my lord, but I grieve that so fatal an event should have made him an inmate under your roof."

" How, what do you mean ? surely the assassin ——"

" Has aimed at his life," rejoined Victoria, tears fast falling from her eyes.

" Aretas Mansfield !" exclaimed his

lordship, evidently horror stricken, “Aretas Mansfield assassinated?” Some minutes elapsed before his lordship could recover the shock, when he became anxious to see captain Allenby to consult with him on the proper steps to be taken under the present circumstances, and he immediately joined him, while Victoria, eager to avoid being by, while they were conversing on such a theme, ordered her breakfast in her boudoir, where Angelica partook of it with her. Victoria forbore to tell her, that her letter was in possession of captain Allenby, as she was certain he would not resign it, but of course make use of it to trace the culprit.

She obtained Angelica’s consent to

impart her story to lord Shurgrove, through whose interest and exertions in her behalf, Victoria assured her she had no doubt an asylum, such as she desired, might be obtained for her.

CHAPTER XXIV.



LORD Shurgrove joined Captain Allenby, just as he had finished the perusal of the important letter; and after some conversation on the subject that so deeply interested them, captain Allenby continued—"This letter unfolds a long train of villainy, and I think must inevitably lead to the discovery of the wretch who wrote it, though it has no signature."—"Let me look at it?" said his lordship; and

no sooner cast his eyes on the writing, than he said—"I know this hand!" and after a moment's thought, added, with a look of horror—"It is the count di Vellino's!"—"Indeed! are you quite sure of it?" asked captain Allenby, who was no stranger to the count.

"I am, for I have often seen it!" said lord Shurgrove, as he opened the letter, and read its contents of which the following is a translation.

"ANGELICA,

"I call on you to prove the sincerity of your love, by your exertions to promote my glory, which will also be the harbinger of your fame. I know, that ere you receive this, I shall have

sailed for the place of our nativity, for Naples ! Start not, nor think I have deserted you, for soon shall you see me again, *if* I find you the creature I believe you to be, the Being moulded to my every wish : *if* not, my heaviest vengeance shall follow you, nor shall the most sacred asylum screen you from my just revenge. And now learn the important trust, which I repose in you, and let your mind kindle at the thoughts of the elevation that awaits me ! know that for months I have maintained a correspondence with those, who are falsely termed the enemies of our country. Our monarch is in no state to suspect the sincerity of my apparent zeal, while his inconsistent consort is as credulous as I could wish. I must retain my reputation

of fidelity to the Sicilian court, while I reap the reward of my exertions in behalf of my employers, to whom I have been enabled afford such information, as has impressed them with the highest sense of my merits, and they have signified their approbation by offering me a distinguished command, if I choose to return to Naples, and openly espouse the Gallic cause. By letters I this day received, I learnt that your elder brother was no more and the younger taken prisoner; and I determined to repair to Naples, but not to assume the honours offered me; *that I shall delay to do till the period which shall behold the fruition of all my schemes.* I go to consult how I can best forward the views of the party, whose cause I have espoused. It is believed at Palermo that

I am in a distant part of Sicily, and when I shall return, no suspicion will be excited respecting *where* I may have spent the interval of my absence, and I shall openly revisit the capital, *provided* the intelligence you, in the mean time, must supply me with, be such as shall permit me to re-appear with safety; otherwise you never see me more. Remember Angelica! our eternal separation depends on the caution with which you act; but if you prove all that I desire I will espouse you, and, when all our plans are ripe, land you in triumph on the Neapolitan shore. Such is to be your reward; now learn what you must perform to obtain it. Throw off your gloomy attire, adorn yourself becomingly, shew yourself in the city; let your evening walk be on the

Marino, your beauty will soon procure you friends, and let it be your business, to learn how I am spoken of, and if any suspicions are afloat concerning me, and what, in a careless casual way, people betray, in regard to their opinion of me: but, as you value our mutual safety do not discover that you have any knowledge of me. I have heard it whispered that an assassination is expected shortly to occur in the neighbourhood of Palermo: be most particular to ascertain who may be implicated in this affair, and who suspected to be the perpetrator. Let this be your chief care, commit all the intelligence you can gain to paper, but never address me by my name. At the end of a week Marteo will be with you, and he will convey to me all your communica-

tions, and if they prove favourable, you may expect to see me shortly after. I inclose, what will supply your immediate exigencies, and enable you to appear as I desire. Burn this scrawl the moment you have perused it, but let its contents be indelibly impressed on your mind, and as you meet my wishes, you may depend on your reward."

It requires few comments on this letter to render perfectly intelligible, the designs of the writer of it; which led him to make a tool of the inexperienced Angelica, while he directed her to the path of perdition. He was aware that no agent he could have selected, could have so fully forwarded his designs as an unsuspected female, who with very little

art, could easily discover the private opinions of her associates, who would speak them freely in her presence. He believed the excess of her affection for him would carry her any length in his service, stimulated too by the expectation of his ultimately making her his wife; which, it is scarcely necessary to add, was the furthest thing from his thoughts.

It has been seen he had far higher views, which he despised not of accomplishing; pecuniary bribes had suborned him to the service of the enemy, but to whom, he delayed *openly* to fly, till entirely baffled in his more ambitious schemes. The letter for Angelica, Marteo had intrusted to a friend of his with a charge to deliver it into her hands the

ensuing morning, for di Velino was anxious it should not reach her till he was at a distance. But the man to whom it was intrusted (with a present for his services, and a promise of more, when it should be ascertained that it had been safely received) was so eager to acquit himself of the charge, and fearful that some accident might befall the letter, that he *immediately* carried it to its destination, regardless of the direction to retain it till the next day. Di Velino, conscious that he was so little master of himself, as to incapacitate him from verbally imparting to Angelica all that he must have told her, without betraying *more* than he wished, thought the wisest plan was to have recourse to his pen, as he could then say as

much, or as little as he chose without being troubled with any questions.

Lord Shurgrove had received several notes of compliment from di Velino, at different periods, and one (relative to the conditions on which he might obtain a residence at Sanseverino) he had preserved, and on comparing it with the letter, no doubt could remain of their both being written by the same hand.

Captain Allenby most deeply regretted the impossibility of his remaining at Palermo to sift this business to the bottom : but his orders were peremptory, and he could not delay proceeding to England. The wind was unfortunately fair, and he

ought at that very time to have been getting under weigh. Lord Shurgrove assured him that he might rest satisfied, every possible step should be taken to apprehend the culprit. The letter that had fallen into their hands was of a description, which required that it should be immediately delivered to the minister of state, to whom lord Shurgrove resolved to forward it, with an account of all he knew and suspected on the subject; Captain Allenby offered to be the bearer of it, and to enter into every explanation in his power, and also impart the facts to lord R— of whose most vigorous interference they were secure. Some of the persons who had been sent in pursuit of the assassin, (and who were the means of spreading

the report of the event so rapidly) were already returned, unable to discover even a clue to guide them in their search.

"However extraordinary it may appear," observed lord Shurgrove to captain Allenby, "I am confident that this letter was written by the man who calls himself the count di Velino, who is besides a *Neapolitan*, and I have heard him address his servant by the name of *Marteo*. I always suspected that man was not what he appeared to be, but could scarcely have believed him so black a villain. And that he was the instigator, if not the perpetrator of this diabolical assassination is quite evident, or how should he have known any thing about it? But my friend, rest assured, all that you leave un-

done shall be performed by me, nor shall such an outrage be committed on an Englishman, much more on one for whom I am so deeply interested, without every atonement being made that such a crime demands."

Captain Allenby was anxious to see his nephew before he departed, and he was now conducted to his chamber. In his way there he encountered the surgeon who had just quitted his patient. He assured captain Allenby that no immediate danger was apprehended, and he was sanguine in his hopes of an ultimate recovery.

Aretas opened his eyes at the sound of his uncle's voice, and seemed to revive

more than he had yet, as instead of replying to the sorrowful expressions and solicitous inquiries of Captain Allenby, he said, “*You must sail without me.*” He afterwards entreated his uncle to be most cautious how he broke the intelligence of his situation to his parents, and to make light of it, and assure them he was in no danger ; when he appeared much exhausted, and captain Allenby rose to leave him, saying he should see him again in the evening, after which he should immediately embark, and sail as soon as possible. On hearing this, Aretas again made an effort to speak, and said “*Why delay your departure, you had better go to-day, the wind may change to-morrow, and you may be detained a long time.*”

Captain Allenby could not forbear smiling at his nephew's anxiety that he should be gone, which he believed originated in a dread that he might be detained till he was sufficiently recovered to accompany him. From this he augured that Aretas was better than he appeared, which was an infinite relief to him, for he thought with the greatest dread of the account he should be obliged to give sir Henry, and of the effect it would probably have on him.

CHAPTER XXV.

IT is unnecessary at this period to dwell on minutiae, it will be enough to say that the account of the assassination no sooner penetrated into the high circles at Palermo, than every one suspected the count di Velino to be the principal in the affair, and the facts substantiated by the contents of his letter, had been anticipated by reports of an extraordinary nature that had been whispered concerning him for some

time past. It had been hinted that he was not in reality gone to the *Val Demoni*, for some curious persons had discovered him under a peculiar disguise, and had watched him to the residence of Signora Bogia, who was called on to declare all she knew concerning her lodgers. In short no proofs were wanting to convict the count, and a proclamation was issued by the government, specifying his crimes and denouncing him as a traitor and an outlaw. While all the English at Palermo, took so active a part in the business as would have compelled the Sicilian government, (had it not on its own account been anxious to do so) to take every possible measure to detect and punish the assassin.

Persons were employed to seize Marteo, who it was expected would return, but he came not. Thro' the intervention of lord Shurgrove (who took a deep interest in the fate of the hapless Angelica,) she was not called upon to give her public evidence against di Velino, who was sufficiently implicated by other proofs of his guilt. It was impossible to conceal *where* or *who* Angelica was, as so many persons had seen her, and the strictest inquiry was of course made after the person to whom Allioni's letter was directed,

The Abbot of the neighbouring convent, was (as Victoria had foreseen) extremely distressed, on learning that it was suspected the assassin had gained access to the grounds thro' the passage to the

grotto, and that he had been attired in the habit of that fraternity. He repeatedly declared it to be impossible, as he himself had lately kept the key of the doors; and by every means in his power, the reverend father endeavoured to clear the brotherhood from the stigma he feared might attach to it. He was eager to convince lord Shurgrove of his readiness to serve him, as he had an interest in securing him his friend and advocate; and it was thro' the Abbot's exertions that his lordship obtained an asylum for Angelica, in a distant part of Sicily, where under such strong recommendations, she was received into a nunnery, and joyfully resumed a mode of life ever most congenial to her feelings. Nor could she experience any regret in quitting a world,

in which she had only known wretchedness, and the most abject humiliation a female could endure. She was resolved to take the veil at the end of a year, and was impatient for the expiration of that period.

She had quitted Sanseverino loaded with presents, and by the munificence of lord Shurgrove and his daughter, (Aretas was not then in a state to be informed of his obligation to her) she was completely secured from all pecuniary embarrassments, and possessed what insured her welcome, and a gracious reception from the chaste sisterhood. Victoria parted from her with regret, and every demonstration of affection and gratitude. Both she and Angelica now felt secure from

every dread of di Velino, being convinced by Marteo's not returning, that the former had been by some means apprized of the publicity of his atrocities, and the vengeance denounced against him, and that he would never again venture on any part of the island ; and they doubted not he had gladly accepted the honours and distinctions purchased by his infamy.

We *should* have before observed, that though di Velino alluded in his letter, to its inclosing what would supply Angelica's exigencies, nothing of that description remained in it when Captain Allenby obtained it; and Signora Bogia protested (when she questioned about it) that it must have dropped out, or had perhaps never been put in, tho' she could, in fact

have given a much clearer account of it had she chosen it.

Captain Allenby had quitted the Sicilian shores a few hours after his second interview with his nephew, who felt much more comfortable when convinced that his uncle had actually sailed for England.

CHAI

ARETAS's recovery was progressive, but so slow as scarcely to be perceptible: his wound was gradually healing, but at the end of a fortnight he was unable to raise his head from the pillow, for more than a few minutes, without its being affected by a swimming or giddiness, which compelled him to recline again, owing to excessive weakness. While he reposed, he would endeavour to support conver-

sation for a short time with lord Shurgrove, who frequently visited him. But Aretas felt his presence irksome, and was always glad when his lordship retired, for the sight of him ever increased the uneasiness of his mind, and tho' grateful for his extreme attention and kindness, he was conscious that he owed it in some measure to his persuasion, that he beheld in him his future son-in-law.

Aretas recalled his last most affecting interview with Victoria with a mixture of delight and anguish ; believing himself on the verge of eternity, he had declared how much he loved, nor longer restrained his feelings, but confessed the violence of his passion. He knew that he *ought* to regret it, but he could not, while he

dwelt with extacy on the tenderness she had betrayed, and her agony at the dread of losing him. Again, and again he called on Lewis to describe her, as he had found her on his senseless body : while sometimes he lamented that they had not died together in each other's arms ; and then again congratulated himself on the shocking catastrophe that had thrown him into his present situation, which must inevitably detain him near Victoria for such a length of time ; and imagined he could discern the interference of a peculiar Providence, who would, by means at present unperceived, accomplish his ultimate happiness. He would sooth himself by this idea, into a state of transient felicity ; but his feelings were con-

tinually fluctuating, and infinitely retarded his advances towards convalescence.

Meantime Victoria had leisure to reflect on every particular of the late occurrence; but what she dwelt on most, was the parting interview with Aretas, and the awful scene succeeding it, in which he had, at length discovered his whole heart to her; but in such a manner, that she was confident nothing but the belief that the hand of death was on him, would have induced him to make the confession. That some insurmountable bar to their earthly happiness existed, was sufficiently apparent; and Victoria felt that her peace was the sacrifice. An awful solemnity had hung over the moment in which Aretas had declared his love for

her, it might have been said that he was dying *for* her, for on her account alone, had the dagger of the assassin been lifted against his life, and the whole scene was of a description which could never fade on the imagination. It seemed to have drawn her closer to Aretas, and bound her to him for ever. Her affection for him, was now a part of her nature; and she felt that it must colour every future hour of her existence. Her mind was not of that light and flexible cast, that admits but the shadow of a passing object, and speedily recovers its transient influence; but what had once reached her heart was treasured there for ever, beloved, caressed, indulged and nurtured.

How severe was the trial she was con-

demned to ? Confident that a cause existed which must compel her to resign the being most beloved, she felt it was her duty to endeavour to reconcile herself to the idea ; and the part she assigned herself, was that of maintaining a steady friendship towards Aretas, without betraying a greater degree of tenderness than propriety could sanction. She resolved not to increase his misery, by an appearance of resentment or reserve, which would infinitely have augmented the bitterness of his fate; but, when she should again behold him, preserve towards him the demeanor of an affectionate sister ; and should he confide to her the whole nature of his situation, endeavour by her arguments, to reconcile him to his destiny, and strengthen (should it be requisite)

his resolution to persevere in the path of duty.

She had never gained courage to question her father in regard to any particulars he might be acquainted with concerning Aretas, (as the latter had requested her to do at their last interview;) for, convinced that his lordship was in some measure deceived himself, she dared not venture on the subject. But when she reflected on the recent event, all other evils appeared light in comparison to the horror she must have endured, had Aretas indeed perished in so dreadful a manner, still she was far from being at ease as to his recovery, and often terrified herself with the most frightful apprehensions, excited by the report of his extreme debility, and the tardy advance of returning health.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THO' much averse to leaving our hero in so precarious a state, we must seize the period of his inaction, to pay a short visit to England, and briefly recount the events passing at Mansfield Abbey. A short time after the return of his daughters, Constance and Mrs. Allenby from Ryde, sir Henry was surprised by the receipt of a letter from captain Bingley, who formally proposed for Isabella, as whose suitor

he begged to be admitted, adding, that he flattered himself his connections and situation in life were such as sir Henry could not fail to approve of. Much astonished at the purport of this epistle, as he knew nothing more of captain Bingley than his name, which he had heard casually mentioned by the young people, sir Henry, without saying any thing of it to Isabella, questioned Mrs. Allenby and Amelia, in regard to this young man. The former asserted very positively that he was in every way a respectable, and she doubted not a very desirable connection. Amelia was silent, till closely interrogated by her father, when she said captain Bingley appeared very amiable.

“ Who introduced him to your acquain-

tance?" asked sir Henry. Amelia hesitated to reply, but Mrs. Allenby promptly returned, "Mr. Dulks." "Dulks!" echoed sir Henry, "what, the fellow that you told me intruded himself on you so impudently, Amelia?"

"The same, sir."

"Oh! that is quite enough! if captain Bingley was an associate of that man it stamps it at once."

"I don't think he was intimate with him," said Amelia; "at least he certainly was not after we knew him. Their being together might have been accidental."

"O, dear," cried Mrs. Allenby, "poor Mr. Dulks was a very good sort of young man."

"Well, well, it is of no consequence," said sir Henry, "Isabella is too young to be married, and this Mr. Bingley is, besides, a military man, and that in itself is a sufficient objection to him in my eyes, and was he every thing else I could wish, I would never consent to his espousing a daughter of mine, unless he quitted that profession; so it matters not who or what he is."

Amelia suggested an apprehension that Isabella was inclined to favour captain Bingley, and that he probably might intend quitting the army..

"O, dont let me hear any more of this sort of nonsense," said sir Henry, impatiently, "I have had enough of juvenile attachments, and I don't desire to have any of Mr. Dulks's acquaintances in my family."

Thus the subject closed, and sir Henry replied to captain Bingley's letter, politely declining his proposal on account of his daughter's youth, and he heard no more of him. But sir Henry was much distressed, as was also his lady, on observing that Isabella's spirits were considerably affected, and, that her depression every day increased, while she and Constance would wander about the grounds for hours together, both equally the prey of disquietude.

Mrs. Hamilton, with that good sense that peculiarly distinguished her at all times, endeavoured to discourage in her daughter's breast the hope and expectation of ever being the wife of her early love, whose youth she represented as quite a sufficient cause for suspecting his constancy, while she declared that should it remain unshaken, she should consider it a perfect miracle. Thus by every means in her power, she prepared her daughter for a disappointment, which, from her knowledge of the human heart, she believed almost inevitable.

She was grieved to perceive that Constance was consuming her youth in vain regrets for the absence of an object, who might already have ceased to think of

her, and often conversed with her on the subject ; picturing the sorrow she was creating for herself, should Aretas return, cold, indifferent, or perhaps totally changed in regard to her. Constance would listen in silence, while she wept bitterly, but her mother could not perceive that her arguments had any beneficial effect ; for Constance recollects all Aretas's solemn protestations, and she felt, that to doubt his stability, would be to doubt his honour. Nor are we in general so ready to admit the inferiority of our own attractions, as to imagine their impression can so easily be superseded. Judging by herself, Constance thought she was wronging Aretas, if for a moment she imagined him capable of changing ; while she reproached

herself for an idea that sometimes occurred to her mind, suggested by the information she had gained from Mrs. Allenby, respecting the persons who formed the party on board her husband's ship on its voyage to Palermo. She had particularly mentioned Miss Clarendon, and the admiration she excited in all beholders, and it must be acknowledged, this fascinating object frequently recurred to the thoughts of Constance, and excited some uneasy sensations, which however she endeavoured to banish, and to persuade herself there was no foundation for them.

It was observed by their mutual friends, that the strict intimacy that for some time had rendered Constance and

Isabella, almost inseparable, suddenly appeared to have received an interruption, and a coolness succeeded between them, which no one could account for, and of which neither would give any explanation. Some time passed on without being marked with any particular event, except the receipt of a letter from Aretas, (of which, however, Constance heard little, neither did it contain any thing of moment, having been written but a few days after his arrival at Palermo) when one morning, before he had quitted his chamber, sir Henry was surprised by the delivery of a letter, which the servant said had been brought by an express. Sir Henry opened it in some alarm, he neither knew the hand or coat of arms on the seal, and with that vague apprehension,

hension that always leads one, however improbable, to dread something affecting the welfare of those most dear to us ; he instantly thought of his son, and opened the letter with precipitation and read the following lines.

“ SIR,

“ Though I have not the honour of being personally known to you, your name and reputation are familiar to me, which, together with the acquaintance I had the pleasure of forming with the Miss Mansfields in the Isle of Wight, have excited my peculiar interest for the welfare of your family. Yet I know not whether I shall not be doomed intrusive in thus addressing you, but my motive for so doing I believe will be a

sufficient apology. I am this moment returned from attending divine service at the parish church of ——. Having been absent from home I had not repaired there for several Sundays before, and was much astonished this day, on the banns being published, to hear the names of John Bingley and Isabella Mansfield announced for the last time of asking. They were too familiar to my ear to fail of striking me, having known both parties, and I immediately concluded that this must be a clandestine affair, and of course wholly in opposition to your will. I lose not a moment in apprizing you of it, and trust by sending this express, it will reach you time enough to enable you to take such

steps as you may think proper in the business.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient, humble servant,

WILLIAM MAITLAND."

Heathfield Park, Sunday two o'clock.

Sir Henry could scarcely believe his senses, he hastened to Isabella's apartment anticipating the shock he received, when, on demanding if she were within, no one answered, and on entering, he perceived that the bed had not been slept in that night. The alarm was instantly spread, no body could give any account of Isabella, and her maid also was missing. Sir Henry ordered out his fleetest horses, and while they were preparing, questioned the express, in order

to learn if he had encountered any one answering the description of the fugitives. The man said he had been delayed some hours on the road, owing to his horse having fallen with him, and his being unable to procure another near the place where the accident had happened ; and while awaiting at a public house, about half way, he had observed a post chaise and four pass swiftly by, but it had been too dark to perceive who was within. Sir Henry looked at his watch, it was already past eight o'clock, and with dismay he reflected that the indissoluble knot might even then be tied.

The church where the banns had been published, was distant between forty and fifty miles, and he could not possibly

reach it till long after the canonical hours had expired, yet he resolved to go in the slender hope that something might have occurred to retard the parties on the road, till it was too late for them to be united on that day. Sir Henry accordingly set off with his mind inflamed with resentment against his daughter, for her rashness, duplicity and disobedience.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BUT Isabella was not quite so much to blame as it might at first appear, though her conduct was certainly highly reprehensible ; but she was not of that vigorous, fine wrought character, from which great sacrifices and heroic actions may reasonably be expected. She was tender, credulous and inexperienced, and unable to resist the importunities made

use of to tempt her from the path of duty.

Mrs. Allenby, (through whose imprudence this attachment had originally been encouraged) had informed Isabella of Sir Henry's having received a letter from captain Bingley, and also of the purport of it, and further observed that sir Henry had acted very precipitately, and with very little feeling or consideration for the unhappiness he might occasion in rejecting captain Bingley at once, without any plea whatever.

This made a strong impression on Isabella's mind, and she thought her lover most cruelly used, and thus she was prepared to receive with compla-

cency a letter soon after conveyed to her from him through her maid, whom he had contrived to suborn to his interest, by the usual powerful arguments made use of on such occasions, and while he remained perdue in the vicinity of the abbey, this trusty emissary promoted a constant communication between the parties.

Bingley persuaded Isabella that he had been barbarously treated by sir Henry, whom it would be useless to importune further. He protested he could not live without her, and made use of every persuasion in love's arcanum, to prevail on her to accompany him to Scotland, but in this he could not succeed; when he took the necessary steps for having their

banns published in a distant parish, and not till they had been called twice did he inform her of what he had done. When, really believing that if she did not consent to his wishes he would commit some violence on himself, she no longer resisted his entreaties, and in all that perturbation and distress natural on such an occasion left the abbey with her maid, soon after the family had retired on the Sunday night, and was received by her lover, who placed her in the vehicle prepared to transport them to the spot where their destinies were to be united.

While Isabella had, in hopeless sadness, been lamenting the cruelty of her father (ere she had heard from Bingley) she had been inseparable from Constance,

who sympathized with her in all her anxieties, and together they mourned the absence of those they loved. But when Isabella, relying on the friendship of Constance, ventured to inform her that Bingley was in the neighbourhood, Constance shrunk from her confidence, and said all in her power to dissuade her from acting clandestinely in any respect, and though she promised not to betray what Isabella had told her, she begged to be no further intrusted, as she must decline being privy to any thing unsanctioned by her family.

Constance was terrified lest sir Henry should impute any improper step his daughter might take to the intimacy with her. She could not feel her-

self justified to betray her friend's confidence, but a coolness ensued between them, which appeared unaccountable to those who were ignorant of the cause.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IT was between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, when sir Henry found himself within a short distance of the place of his destination, and on enquiry, was informed that he passed very near the residence of Mr. Maitland. He, therefore, resolved to repair there first, not doubting Mr. Maitland would be able to acquaint him if the marriage had actually taken place that morning, and

thus he should be spared the disagreeable task of making public enquiries respecting the business of total strangers.

On sir Henry's sending in his name, Mr. Maitland hastened out to receive him, which he did in the most friendly manner, expressing his regret that the baronet had not arrived sooner. "Am I then come too late?" said sir Henry. "I am sorry to say you are," returned Mr. Maitland; "I find that the young people were at the church by eight o'clock this morning, and (the clergyman having received previous notice) they were married immediately, and set off again; or what place, I know not."

Sir Henry was too much shocked and

disturbed for some time, to be able to converse with composure; when he begged Mr. Maitland to inform him of every thing he knew respecting captain Bingley, having first accounted to him for his not having arrived sooner, owing to the accident that had befallen the express. Mr. Maitland was not very voluble in his communications in regard to captain Bingley. He said he knew very little of him, and nothing of his connections; that he was a pleasing young man in his manners, and of an agreeable person; in short, he endeavoured, as far as was in his power, to soften sir Henry's mind towards his son-in-law, and if Mr. Maitland knew any thing against Bingley he suppressed it, for the deed was done, and it was the

Christian's office to reconcile the parties to each other.

Sir Henry very justly observed, it was strange that neither Mrs. Allenby, nor his eldest daughter, who seemed to have been intimately acquainted with captain Bingley, had ever heard him speak of, or allude in any way to his family!— “It is a bad sign,” continued sir Henry, “when people never mention their relations! What is more natural than to speak of those we love, and who must be connected with all the early scenes of our lives? Indeed, I think it impossible to avoid it, unless one was to do so studiously; and take my word for it when a man is so strangely mysterious as never to breathe a syllable respecting his con-

nections, it is because he is ashamed of them, or is disowned by them for something that makes him ashamed of himself!"

"I trust that will not be found to be the case in regard to captain Bingley," said Mr. Maitland; "but, that having obtained the object of his choice, he may prove himself capable of making her happy. My nephew, sir Frederic Raymond, who is at present on a visit to me, was rather intimate with Bingley, and liked him very well—will you allow me to introduce him to you?" Mr. Maitland sent to summon his nephew, who was much gratified at this opportunity of being presented to sir Henry; for though they knew each other by sight,

they were not before acquainted. He assured him captain Bingley was the best fellow in the world, and could not fail to make any woman happy, but particularly one whom he was so doatingly fond of; and that he (sir Frederic) doubted not, from his appearance and manners, that his connections were every thing that could be wished.

Had sir Henry been inclined to mirth, he would have smiled at the ardour and eagerness, with which sir Frederic asserted captain Bingley's merits, which, it was evident were only founded on his own conclusions, and that in fact he knew nothing more of him than did his uncle. Sir Henry did not decline Mr. Maitland's invitation to remain all night at

his house ; as, had he set out immediately on his return, he could not have reached home till after the family had retired to rest, as they did not expect him till the next day.

Though little inclined to enjoy society, the amiable persons that formed the small party insensibly beguiled him of a portion of his anxiety. Mrs. Maitland was a cheerful, well-informed woman, and sir Frederic was never more entertaining ; as both, from natural good-humour, and a wish to dissipate sir Henry's uneasiness, he exerted himself incessantly to afford him amusement, and confirmed the favourable opinion the baronet was inclined to form of him.

Sir Frederic was charmed with the good sense and real feeling conspicuous in sir Henry's conduct; while, instead of giving vent to those bursts of resentment, for which it might almost be said there was sufficient provocation, his deepest solicitude seemed excited by the apprehension that his daughter had taken a step that would involve her future happiness, and formed an alliance that would disgrace her.

In the course of conversation sir Frederic mentioned that it had for some time been his intention to visit Dorsetshire, and that if sir Henry would do him the honour of accepting a place in his carriage, he would re-conduct him to Mansfield Abbey the next morning.

This proposal sir Henry readily agreed to, on condition that sir Frederic should spend a few days with him ; an invitation the latter most willingly accepted. Sir Henry had performed the first twenty miles of his journey on his own horse, and then proceeded in a hired chaise and four. Sir Frederic had no other view in repairing to Dorsetshire, but the hope of renewing his acquaintance with Constance, whose interest in his heart absence had not diminished, and without any fixed plan, he resolved to seek her society, because he could not feel happy away from her. Sir Henry's invitation was highly favourable to his design, which in fact the former suspected (owing to the report he had heard of sir Frederic's attention to Constance when

at Ryde) and it may be well imagined he was most solicitous for his success.

The two baronets reached Mansfield Abbey about the middle of the day, having left Mr. Maitland's early in the morning) and while Mrs. Allenby entertained her old acquaintance, sir Henry joined lady Mansfield and Amelia, who waited to receive him in private. He found them both much affected by the intelligence of the marriage, which had already reached them, through a letter Isabella had addressed to her mother, from the first town she had stopped at, and which had arrived that morning. It was accompanied by one from captain Bingley to sir Henry. Isabella's was couched in the most pathetic terms,

descriptive of the misery she endured, and full of excuses for the step she had taken, which nevertheless, she declared she was convinced would never be productive of any thing but wretchedness, while she laboured under her father's displeasure. Him, she dared not address, but rested all her hope on her mother's intercession in her behalf. Lady Mansfield, who considered Isabella as a child, was completely softened by this moving epistle, and both she and Amelia were prepared to act as her most vigorous advocates.

Captain Bingley addressed sir Henry in respectful language ; alledging, that the decided manner in which he had been rejected, had forbade his hoping

that a second application would have been of any avail; and he had thus been driven to act in the manner he had done. But as he was not sensible of any objection sir Henry could find in him, except his being in the army, he had sent in his resignation, and trusted he should be able to contract his expences to his income, which was one thousand pounds per annum. That his parents had died during his infancy, and that he had none but distant relations, from whom he had no expectations. That he and his wife should repair to lodgings in London, which he had previously secured for her (here he added the direction) where they should remain in the hope that sir Henry would not disdain to answer that letter.

Sir Henry felt more comfortable after the perusal of it, and condescended to answer it by a few lines, which he thought necessary, though he would not permit lady Mansfield to write (as yet) to Isabella, for he thought that so readily to pardon the disobedience of a child was to sanction it. He resolved that she should for some time suffer under the imaginary weight of his displeasure. Amelia was therefore deputed to answer her sister's letter, which she did, in the most affectionate manner, though compelled, in compliance with her father's commands, to add that both he and their mother were too much offended with her to write to her, or see her should she request it. Sir Henry's letter to captain Bingley ran thus.

" SIR,

" I shall, by this day's post, inform my agent in town, that he is to take the proper steps for remitting to you (whenever you may apply for it) the amount of your wife's fortune, viz. five thousand pounds left her by her grandmother. It was always my intention to have completed it to *twenty*, had she married with my consent; but, she has acted so entirely independently of me in this affair, that she has forfeited all claim to my favour, but that which rests on my indulgence; and whether I shall ever pardon her abuse of it, depends wholly on her future conduct, and the proofs I may obtain of the worthiness of her choice.

" I am, Sir, &c.

" H. A. MANSFIELD."

Sir Henry was resolved the matter should rest as it was for some time, while he proposed writing to the colonel of the regiment captain Bingley had belonged to, and taking every other method of gaining an insight into his real character, and to ascertain whether what he had affirmed of himself was to be relied on, when he should be able to decide how best to promote his daughter's future welfare.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHILE these family affairs had been discussing, Mrs. Allenby had been prevailed on by Sir Frederic, to conduct him to the residence of Mrs. Hamilton. Constance was agreeably surprised to see Sir Frederic, and met him with that obvious pleasure, we always experience at sight of an old acquaintance, for whom one feels an interest, from having spent many pleasant hours in their company. Sir

Frederic was quite delighted with her reception of him, and drew from it some flattering, but erroneous conclusions, which put him in such high spirits, that Mrs. Hamilton was quite charmed with him. She had promised to dine that day at the Abbey, whither they all repaired together, and passed a most agreeable evening. It was evident to Mrs. Hamilton that sir Frederic admired her daughter, but she had no idea that a man of his rank, would entertain any serious views concerning her; and as she was convinced he could not touch the heart of Constance, while it retained its present impression, she would not have been sorry that her vanity had been excited, just sufficiently to loosen Aretas's hold on her affections.

Sir Frederic was constant in his visits at the cottage, for several days that he remained in the neighbourhood, though his sanguine hopes died away, when he found that Constance's manner gradually assumed that uniform reserve that had marked it at Ryde; but still he with pleasure availed himself of sir Henry's invitation to prolong his visit, which was at length suddenly terminated by an event, which made him feel that his presence at such a time must be irksome to the family, and that his departure could no longer be delayed with propriety.

Though sir Henry and his lady experienced a tender affection for each of their children, it is certain their grand and chief interest, and most anxious so-

licitude was engaged by their darling son ; whom they considered as the emblem of the future glory of his family. They loved to dwell on his brilliant talents, attractive person, and fascinating manners, and sighed for the period that should restore him to his country and to them.

That he had already returned to the former (though most unexpectedly) they confidently believed on opening a letter, in captain Allenby's hand writing, dated *Plymouth*. Sir Henry began reading it aloud, for lady Mansfield and Amelia, alone were present : but his voice faltered, and he was unable to proceed, when the cautious language met his eyes, by which he was informed, that his son

was not the companion of captain Allenby, but (as the latter stated) had remained behind at Palermo, on account of an accident he had met with, which had been followed by a trifling indisposition, they had feared might have increased on board ship ; and as he was besides very desirous of continuing some time longer in Sicily he had resolved on remaining behind, that he was an inmate at the residence of lord Shurgrove, where he was advancing speedily towards a perfect recovery.

Tho' the real state of the case was so completely disguised in this relation, that there appeared no just grounds for alarm, sir Henry and his lady could scarcely have been more dismayed had the whole truth been revealed to them. That Are-

tas had not himself written, they considered a sufficient proof that he was incapable of so doing ; and distracted by the most frightful apprehensions, sir Henry proposed immediately setting off for town, (whither captain Allenby had said he was about to repair) in order to obtain every information relative to the exact situation his son had been left in, and the nature of the accident he had met with. He had no doubt Mrs. Allenby had heard from her husband, and while Amelia with tearful eyes, was endeavouring to appease her mother's fears, he hastily sought Mrs. Allenby, whom he found reading her letter. She seemed startled by his sudden entrance, and to his eager interrogation “Does Allenby say any thing of my son, ?” she with some hesitation,

and confusion replied, "No"—“Do not deceive me!” cried Sir Henry, “but tell me at once, all he says of him?”

Lady Mansfield and Amelia had now followed Sir Henry; who in order to induce Mrs. Allenby to confess all she knew, said, “I already know of the dreadful accident he has met with, so you may as well acquaint me with the particulars!”—“Well,” returned Mrs Allenby, giving Sir Henry her letter to read—“as you know that he has been assassinated, there is nothing worse to learn!”—Lady Mansfield fell senseless on the floor, while Amelia was almost reduced to a similar state.

Sir Henry's countenance was over-

spread with a ghastly paleness, and he staggered back a few paces, when, supporting himself against the wall, he turned his eyes on the fatal letter, but was some moments before he could sufficiently recover himself to comprehend its purport. It had been written during the voyage, which it stated to have been very tedious, and contained a minute account of all the particulars of the assassination: mentioned the count di Velino as the supposed perpetrator, and that it was concluded, jealously excited by a suspicion that the lady he admired was attached to Aretas, had instigated the crime.

Captain Allenby added, that he had been assured by the surgeon who attended Aretas, that his patient was in a fair way

of recovery. That no further apprehension need be entertained in regard to the count, who had been denounced as a traitor to his country, and dared not re-visit it. These particulars captain Allenby requested his wife, cautiously, and by degrees to impart to sir Henry, after he had been in some measure prepared for them by the letter he should himself address to him.

Tho' the excess of sir Henry's alarm was in some degree appeased by the perusal of this account, his horror, and the rage he experienced against the monster who would have murdered his idolized son, may well be conceived. He loaded himself with reproaches for having sent him from him, and tortured with appre-

bension, that danger might still threaten him, or that his wound might be more dangerous than it was represented; he was little able to offer consolation to his reviving wife, whose violent agitation, produced an indisposition so serious, as forbade sir Henry's leaving her, which otherwise he would have done, in order to accompany Mrs. Allenby to town, where, according to instructions contained in her husband's letter, she was immediately to join him.

Sir Frederic departed at the same time, much concerned at the dismay and wretchedness that pervaded the whole family.

But who shall paint the sorrow of the gentle Constance? Her heart rending

grief ! her deep despair, when the sad tidings reached her ears ? for to her there was an after-sting that aggravated anguish. The fatal deed had been caused by *jealousy* ! *jealousy* that beheld a *rival* in Aretas : and if a rival, a candidate no doubt for the favour of that object whose preference had so nearly cost him his life ? He was an inmate too at lord Shurgrove's, the father of the lovely miss Clarendon, whom she scarcely doubted was the dangerous being who had occasioned this dreadful catastrophe.

Constance could now believe all her mother's prognostics verified, and what she suffered under this persuasion, was in proportion to the tenderness and sincerity with which she loved.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SIR Henry and his family were happily only doomed to experience the extreme of apprehension for a few days, during which lady Mansfield's indisposition still continued so severe as to prevent sir Henry repairing to London, in order to seek an interview with captain Allenby, and fortunately detained him, till to the unspeakable joy of those who loved him so tenderly, a short letter arrived written by

Aretas himself, inclosed in one from lord Shurgrove.

It was easy to perceive that it had been traced by a trembling hand, and it was equally apparent, that tho' he attempted a gay and animated style, it was forced and unnatural. He assured his father he was perfectly recovered, and that his only reason for not writing a long letter, was his averseness to dwelling on those particulars, which lord Shurgrove had been so good as to offer to recapitulate. He declared himself under the highest obligations to his lordship for his extreme kindness, but never once mentioned, or in any way alluded to Miss Clarendon ; but in a studied manner, introduced a

reference to the assassination, in order that he might observe that he had no conception *how* he could have created a private enemy, as he was no one's *rival*, however it might be erroneously imagined so.

After presenting his tenderest love to his mother and sisters, he begged he might be most particularly and affectionately remembered to his friends in the neighbourhood, whom he had ever in mind. This was no falsehood, for no one will dispute that the chief cause of our unhappiness is ever uppermost in our thoughts.

Sir Henry, tho' infinitely relieved, by

even a sight of his son's hand writing, could not help thinking he had never before received *such* a letter from him! written in such a style! Every line, nay every word was *studied*; and the utmost caution marked each sentence, while they abounded in unnecessary words, and the whole appeared written as a matter of obligation, rather than of inclination; and all the care Aretas had taken to prevent his father suspecting the truth, only excited the stronger suspicion.

In the first place, it was very unnatural, that he should *not* mention Miss Clarendon, when he was under the same roof with her, nor even say whether *her* politeness had corresponded with lord Shur-

grove's. In the latter part, he had ventured to allude much more particularly to his *friends in the neighbourhood of the Abbey*, than he ever had before, when addresssing his father ! This Aretas had done in hopes of lightening the unhappiness he was certain Constance would endure, while he believed that sir Henry would not, at such a time, refuse to repeat what he had said. He hoped also it would convince *him* he was *not* inclined to waver. But it had an exact contrary effect, by discovering to his father, that he no longer experienced that timid reluctance, in alluding to Constance, that generally checks and disguises the language which conveys a reference to the object most interesting

to the heart, and which sir Henry shrewdly suspected had sealed his son's lips in regard to Victoria.

In lord Shurgrove's letter, the baronet traced a confirmation of all his hopes, for his lordship spoke of Aretas in the most affectionate terms, and declared that himself and daughter had been miserable, while he continued in a precarious state. He related all that had transpired in regard to Di Velino, and by what he said, it was evident that Victoria had been the object of the count's pursuit, which further confirmed sir Henry in the persuasion that a change had taken place in his son's sentiments. He was comparatively at peace, after the receipt of these

letters, though most anxious for Aretas's return to England, from the dread that further danger might threaten him ; in regard to which he wrote him a long letter, and also replied to lord Shurgrove's ; when he felt more tranquil, and his whole family, and even Constance, partook in his feelings. Amelia had imparted to her the contents of Aretas's letter, which she thought she might venture to do, though only deputed by her father to deliver her brother's kind remembrances, as those of any other friend.

Horace now came home to spend some time, and in him both Amelia and Constance found a mine of comfort ; while he sympathized from his heart, in all

their apprehensions respecting his earliest dearest friend Aretas ;—to whom we shall now return, impatient to ascertain the progress of his convalescence.

END OF VOLUME THE THIRD.

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He whistled as he went for want of thought.

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